Hero Class Civil Warfare

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Rating:
Teen And Up Audiences

Archive Warning:
Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings, No Archive Warnings Apply

Category:
Gen, Multi

Fandom:
僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia

Relationship:
Midoriya Izuku & Yaoyorozu Momo, Jirou Kyouka & Yaoyorozu Momo, Midoriya Izuku & Shinsou Hitoshi, Hatsume Mei & Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya Izuku & Shouji Mezou, Hatsume Mei & Yaoyorozu Momo, Midoriya Izuku & Monoma Neito

Character:
Class 1-A (My Hero Academia), Class 1-B (My Hero Academia), Midoriya Izuku, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Nedzu (My Hero Academia), Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Yagi Toshinori | All Might, Bakugou Katsuki, Jirou Kyouka, Yaoyorozu Momo, Monoma Neito, Todoroki Shouto, Iida Tenya, Tokage Setsuna, Shinsou Hitoshi, Hatsume Mei, Shouji Mezou, Uraraka Ochako

Additional Tags:
Bakugou Katsuki Swears A Lot, Hero Worship, Mind Games, Emotional Manipulation, Villain Midoriya Izuku, But its for class, Heroes to Villains, The Teachers were not prepared, Things get... out of hand., Hacking, bending the rules, Explosions, Paintball, Car Chases, Demolition, Lies, Cheating Villians, Read the Rules You Morons, Otherwise it'll kick your ass, "We're Villains. We don't play fair", Betrayal, backstabbing, Double agents who don;t know they are double agents., Motorcycles, The Sewer Level always sucks, Mild Body Horror (Arms)

Language:
English

Series:

Part 1 of Hero Class Villain AU

Collections:

BestOfTheBestFanfics, Tales of Class 1-A, ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐, Keep Calm and Love Fanfic, The Special Collection, Miscellaneous Must-read Fics, Late's Favorites, The Jewelry Box of Recs, The Witch's Woods, best fic collection ever read, Fine Fanfic, The Bard's Roost, Mirage664's Best of Best, My Hero Academia, (these are) the magic words, FTTN's Favorites, Silver and Gold, My Heart Adores, Purrsonal Picks, Lovely Pieces, Worth the Re-Read, Creative Chaos Discord Recs, Fics that keep me up, Precious Rare and Unique, Bnha fics that keep me from sleeping, Completed (StarBreaker), reasons for my dry eye, BNHA Rereadables, I Sorted Through Shit And Found Gold, Storycatchers' pile of heroic hero stuff, L'sFavs, Brilliant Recs - Reread at any time, BNHA Hall of Fame, Anodyne fics, Real Good Shit, It's 2 a.m. and I'm gonna read it again (cuz once wasn't enough), Continuously coming back to reread, Cosmonauts Fic Recs, Katya's Korner Fic Recs, Astral_Phoenix108's Library, Endlessly re-readable, Where Green Beans Grow, Deku Has A Brain, Jeru's Top Fav My Hero Academia fics, MHA Civil War Fics, Adored By Digitalta's Digital Citizens, Wile Away The Time, TWT FIC REC CHAT, Completed stories I've read, BNHAMultiChapters, Behold the Sacred Texts, SomethingNew_Worldbuilding_Creative_OfQuality, Pyroprude to Elisosly, You haven't lived if you haven't read this, Works Loved By Luna04, Shady BNHA Faves (Including Crossovers), Izuku Leads the Chaos, Моя геройская академия, Read it and weep, I swear to fried potatoes- these fanfictions are SO GOOD, 3am Fics Stealing My Sleep, Delicious Golden Eggs, why im sleep deprived 💙✨, Bnha Bookclub Discord Recs, These are the best written fanfics I've ever read, My Hero Academia Fics to reread, BNHA BEST CHAPTER FICS TO EVER GRACE THE INTERNET, Fics That Could Be Books, BAMF, 僕のヒーローアカデミア - (読み返す [よみかえす]), Got 99 problems but these ain't one, Deku Fics, Cackles After Midnight, Genius Midoriya Izuku, RandomFanfictionsE.g.Anime_2BeRead, The Collection From the Clouds, Mha heart mah soul, Best Fanfictions of AO3, Stories That Are Cool, The Unitary, Well thought out works (Mind games-psychological-personality-world detail-suspense-fluff-crack-smut), ScribeSmith's BNHA Fanfic Library (AKA: Izuku is Best Boi), completed and read, Stories That Deserve More, Hero Classes Civil War, My Favorite My Hero Fics, Favs mesmo, Bamf midori, Leymonaide fic recs, fanfics so good they deserve a podcast episode, Free serotonin! Come get your free serotonin!, Fun Fics Snarky

would read again and again annnnd again, ¡Historias completas que debes leer alguna vez!, Best of the best fanfics, rel'isé, Fanfiction Masterpieces, My hero academia books that prevent me from sleeping, Absolutely favorite works, Fics I enjoy 🫠, Favourite_fanfics_of_all_time_mixed_fandoms, Sven's Absolute Top Fics, Coda, DerangedDeceiver's Favorite Fics, bnha, Quality Fics, if these were books i'd buy them (aka my favorites on here), Bnha titles that were definitely worth my sleepless nights, ✧ anime fanfics ✧, BNHA Fics I Want to Reread, MHA Fanfics That Are Better Than Sleep, BNHA Treasure Box, Recommended Fics to Reread, Secret Stash Of Treasure, Best Fics that I had the Motivation to Start and Finish in a Day, long bnha fics i'll always come back to, Amaris' Favorite Ever BNHA Fictions That She Has Read More Than You Can Count, Unpleasant's MHA Recommendations, FreakingAmazingFavorites, best bnha fics i've had the privilege of reading, Don't Forget These Fics, Blue's fic recs, Bellasfavs, nonsense station's discord recs!, ⌖ the unnerving ⌖ , Best fic i've read, My hero academia, Finished golden ones, Speaker's must-reads, Favorite BNHA fics, bnha dekuism, Surprise! It's Trauma!, Skelebooks (The Graveyard), These are Bundles of Emotions (and I Love them af), I've given my heart and soul for this fic, my fav bnha fics :D, Lady's collection of PERFECT fics., Magnolia's Favourite Fics, 📚 Fanfic Forum Discord Recs, MHA fics that keep me from working like a functional adult□, Stop reading and go to sleep!, 🍀GOAT FICS feat: My Hero Izuku🍀, absolute best picks, Once Again Midoriya Izuku Is Catnip To Trouble, Midoriya "Let Me See What You Have! A Knife! NO!" Izuku, All the best kept here, Extraordinary My Hero Academia FanFics 💯, Magpies Superhero Favs, bnha fics☆□, Fics that soothe my soul at 4am, I can't read this for a while cause of stuff but I'll finish it ✧later✧, Cuz imm'a Angel?, Purple Archivist: Read and Read Again, bernie's bnha rec list, BNHA fics I'd sell my soul to be able to read for the first time again, elian's favorites <3, soul healing comes from fanfiction, Green Bean & Co, Favorites to reread, Villain Deku waters my crops, Completed_01, Adorable must read <3, Finished BNHA fics I liked a lot, Mori's Favorite BNHA Fics!, Goops Very Favorites, Best Stories, the perfect fic doesn't exi-, the holy grail of fanfiction, Fics That I Like □□☆□, My Favourite Bnha stories to read, Road to Nowhere Discord Recs, Faves and must-reads, BB42_Favorite_MHA_fics, The Timelesses, favs, BnhaHits1, fics i come back to all the time, Mintz, i may not be a bottom but these are my tops, Problem Class, Would read again, Finished Fics (bnha), jrmuffin's favorites, Mha fanfics I've read/ reading, Stories that bring me back, The Gift of Caeculus, The Good Shit™, Worth It BNHA Fanfics - Completed, SakurAlpha's Fic Rec of

Pure how did you create this you amazing bean, Bnha (rheos), thiccboimork's reading list, fics to sink your teeth into, comfort fics to get emotional about, I will curse the author if they abandone this one..., gothelixar recs, Scratch's pile of fanfics that they recommend to every stranger like the gospel, Completed BNHA Fics, Kai's Eclectic Collection of Fics, Fics that quench my thirst and breathe life into my soul, Epitome of Writing, my finished reads, A Picky Vest's Favorites, Paris Rereads, Polished Gems, these ones are actually not hurt no comfort, Going Plus Ultra, BNHA_SLICK_Fics, . ☃Thoth's Luxury Library☃., Let's Play a Game, fics with collection tags, bnha wonders✧, BaNHAmmer, BNHA Fics *chef's kiss* 💯 💯 💯, Rhynes MHA favs, Ohoho you've found my secret little cave; let me show you my treasure!, Wolfis MyHeroAcademia Library, The best fics, craftyreader_favs, Lex's Favorite BNHA Fics ٩(●˙▿˙●)۶, (Some of) Tara's Favorite Works, Flower Dragon's Recommendation, .⋆˚.⋆.↩My Bebu multiverse♡♡↬.⋆•.˚⋆., hereBeGems, Good soup, fuckin' mint, IZUKU MIDORIYA AND THE MAGIC OF REALIZING HOW F*CKED UP YOUR SOCIETY IS, Legendary Longfics, BNHA fics that deserve an award, Izuku being a fucking badass, Long_fics, emus top fics, my favorite bnha fics, completed_Zmark, ✧Chris's Best Izuku Fics✧, rainy day longfic <3, My Hero Academia, Favorite MHA Stores, Our Hero Academia!, Best BNHA Fics, the bnha icebin, Fics to read again, The SMARTEST MF: Izuku Midoriya, Like A Favorite Sweater, mort's bnha favorites!!, Favorite BNHA Fics ❤, mha fics that are my will to live, Jaded Discord Server Recommendations, S.T.I.L.L., Earth Shakers - World Makers, Tales of the Hell Class, Interesting stories by wonderful people 💙🐟, The Very Best Complete MHA Plus Ultra Fics, masterpieces i'll never tire of rereading, well written and actually good bnha fics, Civil War Chaos, eat this, My Favourite BNHA Longfics, From the Vault, hixpatch's all time favorites, Академия. Любимые, The_best_fics_:D, unhinged and its 2am? perf mha fics for u, International Fanworks Day 2022 - Classic Fic Recs, fanfic for the soul <3, Brilliant BNHA Fics (multichaptered), Mha ✓, vespertine, finished works I'm in love with, my heart is here, BNHA Fics that cured my cancer, Amazing fics :D, Boku no Hero Academia ✧, Wowowowowowowowowow, All the Best to my tastes, longfics that butter my bread, Re-Re-Readables, Bonkas Absolute Must Reads, 10/10 would re-read bnha, anime related, A badass izuku with 99 issues (seriously is a rabbit with a knife)💙, The Fics You Read When You Want To Revisit Your Favorites, Myra_Approved_Version_of_Midoriya_Izuku, MHAfavorites, Villain Deku, BnHA FFS, The Good Shit 👌✧, These fics are the air I breathe, hufflepuffdemiwizard's completed works, myherofics, M's

BnHA Recs, Mijwan's Favourites, MHA Izuku's mind games and general feralness , My Long loves , Goodsoup1543

Stats:

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Hero Class Civil Warfare

by RogueDruid (Icarius51)

Summary

Heroes lead by Bakugo.
Villains lead by Midoriya.
Seven days prep time.
Three days for Izuku Midoriya to show why they should be glad he's not a real villain.

(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

- Inspired by The Little Deku Who Could by orphan_account

Pregame

Chapter Summary

It begins
(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

1 hour until the exam begins

The sounds of message notifications interrupted the meeting the hero team was holding. Katsuki scowled and pulled his phone from his pocket, seeing a simple message pop up; a live-streaming link sent to his phone from… who the hell was this?

He paused and tapped the link, throwing the feed to one of the screens in the room, drawing the attention of his classmates. The screen was covered in glitched-out static that slowly faded to black on red, a shape coalescing in the darkness.

Soon the shape, which many of them recognized as Midoriya Izuku, came into focus, though the details were still cast in deep shadows. He was wearing some sort of hat with two feathery shapes that looked similar to the bunny ears of his hero costume sticking off the sides.

“Hello, *heroes,”* came a low drawl, one that shocked most of Class 1-A with its change from the usual nervous stuttering they were used to hearing. It was scratchy, almost dry sounding. But more important was the tone. It was… *cold.* Threatening in a way they had never heard from the ball of green sunshine they knew and loved.

“I know that you think you are prepared for me. That you think you are ready to fight me and my team.” Iida, Kirishima, and Uraraka all glanced back to see a scowling Katsuki, eyes narrowed and focused, with Todoroki at his side.

“By all means, come for me. *Hunt* me. Show me what you’re made of.”

The silhouette leaned forwards, revealing that Midoriya wore a form-fitting face mask cast in the shape of a jester’s smile.

“Oh, and Kacchan, or should I say *Paragon?”* Midoriya chuckled, voice childish and innocent. “I hope you’re ready. This test is going to be... *explosive.”*

The feed cut out, and the rest of the hero team turned to look at

Katsuki. He had twenty-four heroes from both Class 1-A and 1-B who had spent the last five days figuring out tactics and working on getting in sync. He had the heavy hitters of the school. The strongest, the *best.* And he would prove it.

“Everyone go get suited up. Get ready,” he called. “We’ll crush them as soon as we get the go-ahead.”

7 days before the exam

Classes 1-A and 1-B were gathered in the auditorium, mumbling and whispered questions flying back and forth. They stood in huddled groups, glancing up at the empty stage. The question on everyone's lips was about what they were there for. Was it about the recent capture of the hero-killer? About the results of their internships? No one knew. Less than two weeks ago they had been under internships, but now, without any warning, they were gathered.

Soon enough, the sound of a whining microphone sent winces through the crowd. They looked up, seeing the small form of principal Nedzu stand before the students on the podium.

For most of the students it only added to their confusion, but the few students who had reason to interact with the principal felt chills run down their spines.

“Welcome Classes 1-A and 1-B, it’s a pleasure that you’re all here today. Today is the start of one of our yearly exercises; the Class Civil War!” This caused more murmurs, people whispering questions amongst themselves. In the middle of the crowd, Midoriya Izuku felt a flicker of recognition. He knew of this, but he couldn't place where he had heard of it before. He thought it was off of a hero training forum… dammit.

“As you all know, a hero’s job is to be wise, powerful, and proactive against evil wherever they find it. But often, you may find the other side of the law possesses the same traits, and you must learn to adapt, to improvise and overcome!” Nedzu was moving emphatically with his words, silencing the crowd as they all focused on him. “As such, we will have two teams, the leaders of whom shall be chosen at random. However! The choice to be a hero or a villain is up to the rest of you. Do you wish to challenge yourself, to act in a new mindset as a villain, as a counterforce? Or do you wish to prove yourself as a hero, putting your potential into your dream? I can’t wait to find out! Present Mic, If you please!” With that Nedzu stepped off the podium and Present

Mic took the stage.

There were a few scattered cheers from the crowd at that, along with determined grins and intense stares.

“Now we shall choose the leaders of the heroes and the villains! These positions are locked and you must accept the role. Often, circumstance is what leads to greatness or leadership, so shall it be here too! First, the leader of the heroes, the Paragon! IT IIIIIIS...” The left side screen behind the podium flickered on, the faces of students flying past… Izuku felt his pulse race, would it be him? Oh god, the nerves! The flickering faces began to slow, coming to a stop to reveal–

“BAKUGOU KKAAATTTSSSUUUUKIIIII!!!!!” Present Mic yelled, gesturing for a prideful and demonically grinning Bakugou to take his place at the right side of the podium. Behind them the image changed, a white crown animation coming to rest on Bakugou's headshot, and the Katakana for ‘Paragon’ appeared under his name. The assorted students looked interested, but some gave off the feeling of being less than enthused.

(That's important, mark them down. Just in case.)

“And now, for the villain, the Kingpin, the darkness who you will face against...!” The roll began again, flickering through faces. Suddenly he felt a shiver go up and down his spine.

He already knew what was going to happen.

As the roll call slowed, and the final picture appeared, he knew he was right.

“MIDORIYA IZZUUUKUUU!!!!!” Present Mic screamed at the world, finger pointed straight at Izuku.

Yes, there it was, green hair with a black crown animated on the brow, red background behind him. The title of Kingpin across his torso, highlighted in glowing red Katakana, and a shy smile on his photo’s expression. Without registering it, he had already made his way up to the podium. He felt like the world was glazed.

Was he having a panic attack… no, maybe? No, just feels like a minor shock. Oh. Fun. Good to know. Fuck.

Present Mic was still talking, laying out a schedule for the next week. Tomorrow at midnight was the deadline to join a team, you had to

have it declared to a teacher. Rooms would be set up for each team leader to plan and organize. A rulebook would be provided after the meeting; and could the two leaders stay behind? The rest of the classes filed out, slowly growing louder as they talked and debated with each other.

Izuku was drowning that out, instead…

Instead, he was having a crisis of faith.

Should he try to truly be a villain? To go against his own deeply ingrained morals and aim to win? Or should he let the heroes, the position he held so close to his heart, take the win without a fight?

The meeting passed in a blur, Bakugou sneering and muttering curses as he listened to the rules. When Izuku was handed his copy, he began to focus once more. He picked up the basic parameters, the words piercing through the haze of dissociation.

The practical part of the exam was in seven days and would have a three-day time limit. Each team would have to be finalized and delivered to the teachers on Monday, two days from now. The five-day stretch from Tuesday to Saturday would have a lighter class load so the teams could plan, coordinate, and ready themselves.

With that, they were dismissed. Bakugou stormed out with a look on his face that screamed he was going recruiting. Izuku got up to follow, but as he left Present Mic caught his attention.

“Hey, Midoriya! Aizawa and Nedzu wanted to talk to you. After all, you need to know your objectives.”

Wait. Objectives?

Black Moves First

Chapter Summary

> The game shows the opening move.
> But life is not chess.
> In this Game, the Villain moves first.
> (Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Day 1: 6 hours, 0 minutes: (6:00 am, local time)

Game Start

"Welcome to your mission briefing. Until now, you have not known the precise parameters of your mission." Aizawa-sensei stood before the assembled hero team. They were in their costumes, each with some variant of the UA symbol backed by wings added to represent them being part of the same team.

Katsuki stood at the front, looking over the screens behind Aizawa as he took in what information they had. "That's because, in the real world, you rarely know what your opponent is after. One hour ago, when the villains entered the city, the test began."

Uraraka blinked in surprise, hearing mutters and curses from the other heroes.

"The chosen field for this is a place neither class has ever had a reason to visit before; Training Ground F, known among students as the Downtown District. It is a full ten-by-ten block of skyscrapers and apartments, modeled after the likes of New York and downtown Tokyo." He turned and tapped the computer behind him, pulling up a video feed.

"Three unmarked white trucks entered the city at the start of the hour, the villains using them as an entry vector. One of them had a signal transceiver attached to the top, and we believe that is where the video that was sent to you was live-streamed from. Traffic cameras tracked two of the box trucks, but the third—the one with the transceiver—took a back alley and seemed to disappear."

"At this point in time, we have no idea what exactly their plan is, but most Support analysts agree this has the markings of a hostage situation. There are 'civil-bots' in most public places, simple

mannequins with basic motor functions and sensors. Keep them alive and safe. They will run from fights and danger, replicating normal civilian reactions, but the villains can and will take them hostage."

The screen changed once more, the video of the trucks vanishing to show one of the trucks backing up and parking at a loading dock. Four figures in loose black jumpsuits, covered with hooded jackets, got out and began pulling cases from the truck.

"This is the back camera from the bank in the city. Soon after that, all camera feeds to and from the bank stopped."

The screen flickered to another unloading; five equally disguised figures stepped out of another truck. All of them were armed with briefcases and carrying boxes of supplies.

"This is the only camera we have access to at the government building across the district from the bank. It seems the villains have split up, attacking multiple locations at once."

The screens changed, the conference table that the heroes were gathered around lighting up with a hologram of the simulated city.

"Paragon, the mission command is yours. Your objectives are to detain or eliminate all villains, while avoiding civilian casualties or collateral damage to the best of your abilities. Your priority, however, is to bring in the subject 'Kingpin' alive for questioning." With that, Aizawa stepped away and the door opened. Katsuki stood, looking at the map. After a moment of consideration, he began to mark it with entry points.

"We'll start with five teams. Leaders are me, Iida, Todoroki, Shiozaki, and Tsuburaba. Keep in contact. Iida, your team is hunting. Find that third van. I don't trust not knowing where it's gone to," he said. "Todoroki, Tsuburaba, your teams are heading for the district. Set up a forward camp and keep an eye out. My and Shiozaki's teams will head out to the bank. If we work fast, we can stop them before they do any lasting damage. Keep in touch, and keep each other updated. Move out," he called out, surprisingly professional for his normal demeanor.

"Heh. Shitty Deku thinks he's going to outmaneuver me…" He grinned, teeth pulled back in a vicious smile. "I'll show you how worthless and beneath me you are."

7 days before the exam

Aizawa Shouta looked at his student, his exhaustion reaching even deeper than normal as he took in Midoriya's distant expression and strange mood. He had barely said anything, just sat there with a cup of tea in hand, staring into the steam.

Just as Shouta was going to start, he was cut off.

"That selection was rigged, wasn't it?" Midoriya's expression was sharp with the focus that Shouta had only seen when Midoriya or his friends were in danger. The intensity of it said that he was on overdrive, mind racing through mad plans and data. He had seen how Midoriya reacted during the USJ attack. He'd also heard about the Stain incident.

"...Yes." He wasn't going to lie. Not now. Midoriya was already exhibiting what Shouta wanted to see. That drive, but not for another. This time, only for himself.

"Fine." Midoriya held up his rulebook. "Are these all the rules, in their entirety?"

Aizawa nodded, "Yes."

Midoriya lowered the book and with a quick motion drained his teacup. A moment of silence passed, the teen clearly considering something, before he looked up and met Aizawa's eyes once more.

"Please, tell me about the objectives."

'Ah, the meat of the conversation.'

"There will be 15 objectives planted inside the city. To pass the exercise, you must acquire at least five of those objectives and escape with all or most of your team. Extra objectives will 'improve' your final score and even contribute extra credit and help raise your grades," he said.

"Each objective is vaguely based on a different crime. 'Killing' a specific civilian target, or acquiring one object or another. Finding a certain document, perhaps destroying a certain server. Beyond that are the two other win conditions that you can complete. Escape the city on the third day or make the heroes unable to continue and/or force them to retreat. If either of those two conditions are met, you automatically pass, even if it's on a technicality."

Midoriya seemed distracted, lips moving slightly as he processed the new data, before he looked back up. “What about loss conditions?”

“There are three. All villains are taken down and captured. You, the Kingpin, are killed or captured by the hero team. Or, you leave before the third day, which would be considered a forfeit.”

Midoriya nodded thoughtfully. Then, almost hesitantly, he asked another question. “Where’s the test taking place?”

“Training Ground F, the downtown district.”

An incredulous pause broke the conversation, as Midoriya looked at him in realization. Shouta could tell Midoriya saw the faint grimace on Shouta’s own face. After that, Midoriya went through a quick flash of various expressions. Aizawa caught both confusion and understanding.

“Sensei… when's the last time the villain team won this exercise?”

A pause stretched out by tension. Eventually, Shouta sighed.

“It was back when I was a first-year. I heard about it through gossip and later from hero course classmates. There was a third-year with an overpowered fire and heat manipulation Quirk. He works with Endeavor now. Endeavor himself is quite proud of being one of the only Kingpins to ever win, and even holds the current record. Even then, no villain team has ever won with full marks.”

“But… why?” Midoriya asked hesitantly. If Shouta were a betting man, he’d say that Midoriya already knew the answer.

Pausing, he decided to give the clarification anyways, giving a hard glare towards the cafeteria where the rest of the hero course would be.

“Because no hero wants to play the villain. They don’t want to be the bad guy. I’m not going to sugarcoat it, problem child. You’re going to be outnumbered. Overpowered. The game is going to be stacked against you. Which is a shame, because that makes this entire ordeal less effective.”

He glanced at Midoriya, who was now staring into his empty cup with a thoughtful expression.

Slowly, that expression shifted…

“Thanks, sensei.”

Midoriya placed the empty cup in his saucer and grabbed his rulebook before leaving.

Shouta couldn’t help the grin that stretched across his lips at the look and stance of his student as he exited the door.

This year's Civil War would be interesting.

Feints and Misdirection

Chapter Summary

Iida's team hunts down the third truck, while The Bank presents an unpleasant surprise.
(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Chapter Notes

ART??!?!??!?!

Scarlotis Luna DID THIS

Day 1: 6 hours, 34 minutes (6:34 am, local time)

Tenya looked back, head-counting his team once more. After getting a ride from a van to the simulation city, the driver had dropped them off less than four blocks from where the truck was last seen. Looking back at his team, he mentally reviewed each person and their Quirk.

Uraraka Ochako, his second, Zero Gravity. Shishida Jurota, brawler and scent tracker. Quirk: Beast, gives heightened animalistic senses and strength. Kodai Yui, the team defender, has a moderate growth Quirk, can become a giant. Then his fifth, Tsunotori Pony, with the Horn Cannon Quirk and mutation.

While his team wasn't the strongest, Bakugou had made sure they had enough power to fight.

Soon enough they found the alley, a thin canyon between two rows of buildings.

“Shishida-san, can you pick up anything from the truck’s passing?”

The taller teen leaned forwards, crouching as he took deep, long breaths.

“I can smell… exhaust. Exhaust and burned rubber. And look, skid marks. They stopped suddenly here for a bit,” he pointed out, kneeling over some darker streaks in the alley pavement.

Tenya looked up and around, the rest of the crew following suit. The buildings on either side of them were windowless, and the alley itself sloped down and back up on the far side. Tenya’s eyes tracked along

the wall and found something.

“There. A garage door. They never saw the truck leave, right?”

“Iida-san, should we perhaps radio in?” Kodai’s quiet presence appeared at Iida’s side, looking at him with curiosity, and he nodded in agreement.

Iida tapped the side of his helmet, connecting to the group channel. “Iida reporting. My team and I have found signs of the third truck. There's a garage door down the alley. We want to see if they parked it here.”

“The hell are you waiting for, Glasses? Go look. Check in if you find shit, or in half an hour.”

“Understood.” Tenya tapped the comms and sighed. Bakugou may have tempered his language when directed towards his team, using it for his ‘nemesis’ instead, but he was still terribly curt and unprofessional.

Regardless, Tenya had a job to do.

“Uraraka, Kodai, please keep an eye on the alley entrances. Shishida, Tsunotori, with me.”

The three headed in, eyes peeled.

With careful steps, they reached the garage; a quick inspection revealed it was sturdy. Likely another loading dock of some sort. Checking the digital lock next to it, Tenya turned when he heard Shishida inhale deeply. “The exhaust trail leads here. Shall we knock?”

Tenya grinned. “Of course. Tsunotori-san, would you care to perform the honors?”

The horned girl grinned, skipping backward and crouching.”Yes!” she said, and with a skip and a leap, she slammed into the garage door full force, horns shredding the metal so she could enter. As one, both men grabbed the sides of the entry and ripped it to the side, widening the hole for ease of access. They stepped in to join Tsunotori in a ready stance.

Inside the room was indeed a loading dock, the ramp at the far end of the bay leading up to more doors.

“Iida, you guys okay?” Uraraka’s voice came over the comms, and Tenya took a moment to look around, eying the corners.

“We are fine, but there's no sign of the truck. Or the villains.” Indeed. The very bay itself, while filled with pallets and crates, had no truck present. The room was clean, however. No dust, no debris. It was almost creepy.

“Shishida-san, is the scent still here?” Tenya asked.

“Stronger than ever, Iida. It sat and idled here, I guarantee it,” The beastly teen called, inhaling deeply once more.

“Where did it went?” Tsunotori asked, looking around with confusion, unaware of her mangling of the language.

“Spread out. Check for clues,” Tenya decided, tapping the radio to contact the girls outside. “Uraraka, Kodai, no sign of the truck now, but it was definitely here.”

“What's the plan?” came Kodai’s quiet response.

“Uraraka, get a rooftop perch and keep an eye on the alley. Kodai, circle around and tell us what this building is supposed to be. I’d rather not get blindsided by not knowing what to expect.”

Two affirmatives later, the line went quiet once more. He looked at the others. Shishida was in the center of the room, trying to follow the scent trail. Tsunotori was jumping up and around the room, checking the boxes and walls for secret passages or weak points.

Tenya was about to tell them to give up and move on when Tsunotori knocked down a stack of crates.

“TSUNOTORI,” both boys cried out in annoyance, and she shyly bowed.

“Sorry! Those were really, really light. I got on them, I lost my—”

She paused, looking at where the boxes had been. There, looking like it had been sunken and melted into the floor, was a manhole cover.

Chaos. That's what the T-intersection in front of the bank looked like.

Cars were on their sides, piled up into rough barricades and covered in broken civil-bot bodies. Some of them were still faintly trying to

struggle out from where they were pinned, their AI too dumb to realize they were practically dead.

Standing dead center on the wall-like pile of broken steel and glass, glaring down at the people approaching, were two dark figures. One wore a form-fitting black suit with a fedora and a bow tie in red, contrasting with his pitch-black skin and silver hair, which was styled flat and sleek. The other wore a ragged black cloak, but the abnormal shape of his head was clearly visible.

“Kuroiro and Tokoyami,” Shiozaki Ibara murmured, looking at Katsuki who stood next to her, eyes focused on the blockade before the bank. “They can’t possibly believe they can stop us just by themselves, can they?”

“No… this is a trap.” Katsuki eyed the skyline. Around the bank, the skyscrapers had backed off slightly, leaving the building just a bit taller at ten stories than its nearest six-floor neighbors. “I just don’t know what the consequence of tripping it is.”

7 days before the exam (final class of the day)

Izuku sat quietly at the back of the class, eyes roaming with a strange intensity. He concealed his act behind the guise of reading the rule book. Already, he’s found three loopholes that would allow him to stack the deck in his favor, and his mouth moved silently as he thought through Class 1-A’s weaknesses. He needed potency, people whose powers would counter the greatest amount of opponents at once. He could already tell by Iida, Uraraka, and Todoroki’s attitudes and quiet demeanor, that they were all torn. Though he expected all three would go to the hero side of the fight. With his blessings.

But he could probably get some of the others. Asui would be a good pick, an all-around physical fighter with agility. Tokoyami as well, if only for the sheer power of his Quirk. If he could get Hagakure and Ojiro, that would offer him more options. And with two agility-based fighters he could look for more utility potential, things that would let him acquire his objectives.

He could already tell that Kaminari, Kirishima, and Sero were all siding with Bakugou. But Ashido looked torn, despite her hero name being somewhat villainous: the Alien Queen…

Aoyama was a wild card; his narcissistic personality could veer him one way or the other. But having a glass cannon like him on the

villain side would be a stroke of luck. Mineta would be determined by which side had the most ‘hot bods,’ as he said. Jirou… She was glancing at him and then back to—

Izuku paused, green eyes meeting gray.

Yaoyorozu Momo smiled and nodded.

Well then. That made the entire game change.

Now, he had access to *resources.*

He smiled back and tapped the cover of his book, grinning.

His eyes roved over the last of the room. Kouda. Undecided. Sato… probably a hero. Shouji… hero. Maybe.

And then Class 1-B.

Yeah. He could make this work.

Hard Counters, Delay Tactics, and Time

Chapter Summary

> Conflicts of interest, Threats of destruction, and the Villains play for Time.
>
> (Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Day 1: 7 hours, 14 minutes (7:14 am, local time)

In all honesty, Shouto could do without the long silences of the fake city. While it was decorated with cars, and the occasional civil-bot stood or wandered small paths through the streets, the city itself was quiet.

On the corner across the intersection from his hiding place was the short wall and squat building identified as the district's 'government building.' It was a horrendous piece of postmodern architecture, all blocky, brutalist angles and large windows.

He and his team were crouched in an alley while Tsuburaba's team had taken over watch on a nearby roof. A glance back showed his 'capture' squad. Bondo Kojirō, the towering giant with the adhesive Quirk, stood at the back of the group, crouched. One of his teammates, the petite Komori Kinoko, sat on his shoulder, arm already half-covered with moss and small mushrooms as she used her Quirk. She sent the spores towards the building to help prepare to seal it off.

Closer were the other two members: Mineta Minoru, the mini-pervert with the sticky balls, and Sero Hanta, with the tape Quirk.

Looking up, he tapped the small earpiece he wore, contacting Tsuburaba's team. "Tsuburaba, we are preparing to seal the building off. Any sign of the villains?"

"Not yet. There are several downed civil-bots in that courtyard, though. Most moving weakly," Tsuburaba's voice echoed slightly over the radio, but Shouto heard it just fine.

"Understood. Keep me updated." With that, he tapped his comm again and considered how to proceed. He decided a dash to get closer, even if just to the outer wall, would be best.

"Komori, start with the paralytics. Everyone else, medical masks."

Sero, Mineta, and Shouto all slid their masks on. Then, with a nod, Tsuburaba turned the corner. Filled with purpose, he began striding out into the street towards the government building, his team falling in a diamond position.

“Contact, front doors. Single target.” The crackle of the radio was unexpected, making his team tense as they continued. “He’s moving to meet you. Watch out.”

The heroes were halfway across the intersection when a figure dressed in matte black body armor and deep blue accents, a long black jacket, gas mask, and hood stepped out from around the corner of the gate, one hand up in a placating motion.

“Heroes, so nice of you to show up!” a muffled and distorted voice called out. Shouto slowed, the rest of his team spreading out behind him.

“Flank and capture. Go–” Shouto began.

“I really wouldn’t, heroes.” From his pocket, the villain (who was this? Shouto didn't recognize them) pulled a very easily identifiable object. Black plastic, a big red trigger, and a radio receiver antenna.

A detonator.

“After all, the fireworks show we have prepared is… very loud.”

Shouto stopped, tensing. This wasn’t an assault mission anymore. It was now a hostage situation.

Over the comm, he could already hear Tsuburaba radioing in.

Bakugou would never let him live this down.

Katsuki jumped, using an explosion to twist in midair, dodging back.

The early morning sunlight was their biggest ally and their biggest enemy right now. Kuroiro's Quirk, ‘Black,’ allowed him to fuse with the ‘black air’ cast by the shadows and smoke, which made the entire area of space he was connected to pitch-black. That amorphous cloud was wrapped around the middle of the street, centered on Tokoyami. The fact that the streets leading up to the sun-backed bank were cast in shadows meant that they were almost entirely consumed by the shifting and twisting mass of darkness. A glance at the clock told

Katsuki he had time on his side, as noon would be approaching, but that didn't really matter because—

He lept over a massive chunk of a car being slammed out of the shadows.

—Dark Shadow was more than powerful enough to rip through anyone in his way while in the shadows. And that wall of cars wasn't a blockade—

A twisted chunk of bus crashed off the nearby walls, shattering a glass storefront.

—it was ammunition.

Katsuki had already ordered Shiozaki's team and his own to start rescuing civil-bots, rushing them to a designated shelter a few blocks away. At this point, despite Katsuki's sincere anger at the situation, all he could do was wait for the sun to rise high enough so they could get close.

He glanced around. His team was the 'hammer' of the squads; Tetsutetsu, Kirishima, Sato, and Rin Hiryu, all physical fighters with some form of strength or durability enhancement. Even now, they were holding the line, catching or deflecting the tossed bits of automobiles, while Shiozaki's more range-and-utility focused support team dealt with civilians.

He hissed as he got a report over the comms from Tsuburaba. Half and Half was stuck in a standoff and they had no idea who the opponent they faced was. All they could tell was that they were male, taller than normal, and didn't show signs of a mutation Quirk. And had a gas mask, so the spores from Shroom Girl wouldn't affect him.

That narrowed it down to maybe one of five possible people. The four Class-B guys who were villains, or Aoyama. It probably wasn't Aoyama, given the figure wore all black and blue.

As Katsuki blasted another flying tire out of his way, he looked up. It was almost nine o'clock now. Two hours and the sun would be high enough to attack again. For now, he gritted his teeth and fell back, barking orders over the comms. He would set up a perimeter, keep the place on lockdown, and see what High Class says.

After all, he had a better plan than to send his most mobile team into the tunnels, where they would be at a heavy disadvantage.

Instead, he would call them over to help with the bank. He could use another flank.

7 days before the exam (after school)

Izuku sat with his back to a tree in the courtyard. He had a few minutes before he had to leave and there was something about the rules he wanted to check one more time…

'Rule 12: Heroes and Villains are not allowed to enlist the support of UA teachers and staff for extra equipment or training for the exam. UA staff are to be neutral and objective observers of the teams involved.'

What was more interesting was what it didn't specify.

He stood and stretched, before turning and almost running into someone.

"Oh, sorry, didn't see you there!"

"No problem," came the quiet voice, as Izuku looked up at the taller boy. He recognized the distinctive six arms and face mask. "I was actually looking for you."

"Shouji-san?" Izuku tilted his head, curiosity in his eyes.

"Could we, perhaps, walk and talk?" Shouji gestured towards the path leading away from UA.

"Of course!"

Shouji and Izuku shared pleasant small talk for several minutes until they were close to the gate and away from people.

"I'll be clear and simple. I want to join the villain team."

Izuku beamed up at Shouji. "Of course you can join! Is there any particular reason why?"

Shouji shrugged, looking off into the trees. "At the Sports Festival, I felt like I underperformed. I was key in the second match, defending my team, but it felt… cheap, particularly when losing. Then I saw you and Todoroki fight and was in awe. You and Todoroki fought like the world was about to end because of ideals. Beyond that, I know you tend to plan and outwit most people in class when it comes to Quirks, and I have a strong feeling you can win this… And I'd like to be on

the winning side for once," Shouji trailed off, voice softer for that last part.

He jerked when Izuku grabbed his shoulder.

"Well then," came Izuku's voice, dark green eyes glinting with something akin to sharp glee. "I suppose I can't let you down now, can I?"

Shouji was still off guard when Izuku turned and started walking.

"Come on, villain. Let's see what we can work out before we head home."

After a moment, Shouji was quick to follow his new leader.

Economic Downfall

Chapter Summary

> The Villains proceed to the next stage of their plan, leaving the Hero's in the dust.
>
> (Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Day 1: 11 hours, 02 minutes (11:02 am, local time)

“Iida and his team are regrouping at the bank.” Shouji Mezou looked over the wall of holograms and camera feeds from across the city, his top arms folded across his chest as the lower four deftly manipulated the images on the screens. “Todoroki and Tsuburaba are holding, but Todoroki retreated back to the far side of the street.”

Mezou had been impressed by the outfit given to him the day before, courtesy of Mei and Momo. It consisted of deep blue slacks, a crisp white shirt somehow tailored for all his arms, and a black tie. Along with those were a pair of black suspenders, a deep green-and-black vest, a new mask, and a matching hat. His hat was a full-on stetson—broad curled rim, angled pinch, and tanned leather for the band. Alongside his ‘boss,’ it was clear that he was the muscle, the left hand. The mask itself was slightly different from his usual cloth. It was taller, coming to just under his eye sockets, and made of a tougher plastic material. After taking a few minutes to adjust, it had seemed to practically melt into his skin along the edge, and the note from Hacker and Forgery informed him that it was able to filter the air. That was a nice benefit.

“Radio check,” came the voice of Izuku from the table behind him.

“This is Blackout. Nightmare and I are both losing steam. The sunlight has reached the end of the block and is pulling up on the doors. We are pushing our limits as it is.”

“This is Hold Up, the standoff’s getting tense. We’ve both taken to resting on our sides of the street, but sooner or later the tension’s gonna blow. They keep looking like they’re ready to jump the gun.”

“This is PR. I got the bank vault open and the objective’s been retrieved. Waiting for the ground team to open the exit.”

“This is Smuggler. Bank sub-basement is estimated five minutes from contact.”

“Larceny here. Beta charges placed, detonation is at your command.”

“Forgery speaking. We are still looking for objective 3, but we have number 2 held captive and ready for transport. We require an opening to get underground.”

“Confirmed all. Hold positions, update coming in five.” Mezou nodded while marking each objective down and looked back.

There, sitting with his mask held up to the light, was Izuku with the other two members of the ‘King’ team.

To the left was a figure, dressed much like Izuku but with the full suit jacket and tie. A black vest on a black shirt, together with a green tie. A full-face helmet with a glowing green question mark hid his features and hair. A fedora accented with a purple and green flower in its band rested on top of it. He tilted his head, and a slightly distorted drawl came through the speakers. “Well, now. It seems that makes four objectives in reach of our hands. Eleven still left to hunt for.”

The other figure nodded, tapping furiously on her computer. Her outfit was different, a long black dress with pink-tinged snake scale patterns winding around it. Her mask was a full-face gas mask, with an attached hood and short scarf around her neck. “We have possible locations for another seven objectives and Animal is continuing his search pattern from the tunnels to try and find the rest.”

Standing up, Kingpin walked around the holograms to a slot of light between two curtains in a large glass window and looked out, observing the noon sun rising into position.

“Pull the Cash-Out plan on the bank. Hacker, Con Man, you’re going to be up in a few hours. Get some rest, we’ve been up half the night. Assault, help set up a chase with the government crew. Have Hold Up and Graffiti take the truck and a civil-bot hostage. Have Drug-Runner prep for them in the northern half, in the fourth tunnel,” he called out, eyes tracing the faint lines of smoke from near the bank. “And tell them to bust out the guns for this. Leave an impression.”

“Will do, King.” Mezou nodded. Con Man and Hacker both murmured agreement, stretching before they stood and headed for the doors to the left.

Mezou started to relay orders and Izuku stood silent, waiting.

The opening moves were done, Bakugou was going to force the momentum sooner rather than later. All he had to do was lead it the wrong way.

Time to change the rules.

“Too bad. It’s a nice looking bank too.”

Eijirou was pumped. The tension, the fight against the ‘Dark Forces of Evil’ that Tokoyami and Kuroiro presented! It was so… SO… MANLY!!! And he got to work with Tetsutetsu! The two of them had a hell of a time blocking and catching the incoming vehicles. Even with strength and durability, momentum was still momentum and Dark Shadow had a hell of a throwing arm.

As the bright light of high noon finally began to hit, he watched the two villains retreat into the bank. Kuroiro turned the dark space behind the glass into a wall of twisting shadows as the two vanished.

Bakugou stood next to him, standing at the end of the street. A moment passed, and he reached up, tapping his earbud.

“Iida, swing wide to flank. Shiozaki, try and clear an entrance on a higher floor. We’ll charge in sixty seconds.”

As they gathered, ready to move, there was a sudden sound in the silence.

Bakugou’s phone was ringing.

“What the fucking hell,” he muttered.

Eijirou was sure Bakugou had silenced it! Weird!

Bakugou lifted it and saw a new text message, with another video-stream link. He glanced up and scowled, before tapping the link. A moment of loading later, it started to play.

“Ah, Kacchan. I have to say, you and your teams have been impressive so far. Iida even found the access point! I was sure that would be a secret for a while longer.”

“Get to the fucking point, Deku. What the fuck are you calling me for?”

“Oh, just keeping you away from the bank for a bit longer. Don’t want you caught in the blast radius after all. Enjoy the show!” With a click, the stream cut off.

Tetsutetsu paused, blinking in confusion, looking at the bank. “What does he mean by blas—”

Things happened quickly, but everyone would remember it for years to come. First was a flash, the windows on the bottom floor, no longer concealed by Kuroiro's blinding smoke, were blasted out by a shockwave, followed by a burst of flames. Along the central column of the building, more explosions rang out in quick succession, the windows blowing out in a cascade of broken shards, leading up.

For a moment it was still, before with a slow echoing crash, the building began to fold in, collapsing in on itself, sending a cloud of dust racing through the streets. All of the teams present covered their faces, trying to see through the dust as it lingered. When it finally began to thin, they almost wished it hadn’t. The building was gone, nothing but rubble spilling into the adjacent buildings and the street in front of it.

“He… he blew up the building.” Sato was trying to stay calm, but Kirishima could see the faint glint of terror in his eyes.

At that moment, he couldn’t blame him.

This was suddenly far more real than he thought it would be.

6 days before the exam (lunch)

Izuku ate slowly, taking time to send glances at Shouji, Yaoyorozu, and Jirou, before tilting his head at the doorway to each of them. Soon enough, Izuku cleaned off his plate and slowly made his way to the door. Out of his periphery, he could see Jirou and Yaoyorozu stand and walk to empty their tray and Shouji beginning to stand as well.

He pulled out a notebook, flipping through to the new pages he had started last night.

Rewritten notes about the three people who had confirmed villain status, or at least implied it.

Shouji’s questions were mostly limited to his arms’ capabilities. How

complex and how detailed he could manipulate his flesh. A quick sketch of a possible villain attire added to the paper.

Similar sketches and notes filled pages for Yaoyorozu and Jirou, though he left the ‘weakness’ section blank. If they paid attention and decided to suddenly defect and join the heroes, he’d rather keep the weaknesses he had noticed as surprises.

He stood and waited and soon the two girls stepped out, glancing around before Jirou stepped forwards. “Hiya, Boss. We want to join the villains.”

They paused as Izuku roved his eyes around. “I’m not exactly in a position to decline, you understand. But, why join me?”

“Mineta. In part. We plan to tell him we’re joining the heroes and then pull a fast one. Beyond that...” Jirou trailed off, looking at Yaoyorozu.

“In the Sports Festival… we didn't do very great. Both us were taken out in the cavalry round and we feel like we were unprepared. Now that we’ve gone to internships, despite how useless my internship was, we want to prove we are better than we were,” she swore, looking up at Izuku, who was shocked to see the sheer anger in her gaze.

“Well, welcome aboard.” Izuku gave a smile rubbing his head sheepishly, and the tension drained from the group.

With that Izuku turned and started walking, leaving the girls to look on in confusion, before jumping as a rough voice spoke up behind them.

“We should follow him. I think we’ll find it quite informative,” the six-armed teen muttered, before nudging them both gently.

The girls nodded, and the three villain team members hurried to catch up to their leader.

Before long they stood together looking at a heavy-duty steel door with the name card that inspired fear in those who recognized the name on a personal basis.

Support lab 4: Hatsume Mei.

Fear, Lies, and Heavy Weaponry

Chapter Summary

Reactions across the city, and a stalemate breaks.

(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Day 1: 11 hours, 19 minutes (11:19 am, local time)

The standoff at the government building was momentarily distracted.

The sound of explosions and the growing cloud of dust and smoke in the distance made all heads turn that way; the heroes looking on with disbelief, the villains with a sense of relief and tension. Next was his turn.

Inside his gas mask, Kaibara Sen was also talking frantically with his partner. “He said to use the gun?”

“You heard him as well as I did! I’m just thankful that Forgery is here to help me finish setting this up and I hope to God that Hacker’s guns work the way she said. This is going to be rough either way.”

“Fine. Forgery, Sparkle, you two good?” he asked.

“We’ll be fine. Animal already has the escape route open and we are less than a minute from the third objective. Then we’ll take the low road back to HQ. It is quite a shame that we didn't have enough explosives to blow up the government building in its entirety in order to cover our tracks, but we have enough incendiaries to make do. Your bluff was well played.”

“Alright, I'll kick us off here, I guess. See you guys soon,” Sen muttered, seeing the heroes turn back. He raised his hand, showing the detonator with a tilt of his head that belied amusement.

The sound of an engine roaring to life echoed over the radio.

“Oh, and Awase, if you run me over I’ll fucking break your neck,” he muttered.

“Oh, relax. I know how to drive a box truck. I do it for my uncle during the summer all the time!”

The sound of the truck roared, and he could hear the squealing of the

tires.

Mineta Minoru shivered, seeing the explosion in the distance, hearing the swears and exclamations over the comms. It was frightening. He had joined the heroes because he overheard that Jirou and that smoking hot piece of ass Yaoyorozu would be joining, and by the time he realized overwise he was here. And then Bakugou, the fucker, had to put him on a team with only one girl. *One!*

And now he had to deal with *this* bullshit! *Explosives!*

He shivered, glancing back at the masked guy with the damn detonator! He was tempted to just *run.* Fuck the consequences!

The villain spoke. “Well, it's been real and it's been fun. But it hasn’t been real fun. You get what I'm saying, heroes?”

Wait, what was going to–

“But you know how it goes. Your team finishes up a mission, you realize your bluff is boring, and you call a ride. My Uber should be here any–”

The last word was cut off. The sound of a truck engine roaring to life as it came swerving and drifting around the corner to the north. Minoru panicked, looking at the once white truck. The rear box was now a deep red–

“–moment.”

–And painted with a massive black sigil. A black blade wreathed in black wings sweeping down from the handle, with a bright acid green V overlaid over the entire image.

A voice yelled, both over the communicator in his ear and from in front of him. It was Todoroki.

“THE DETONATOR IS FAKE. HE BLUFFED US, ATTACK NOW.”

In a panic, Minoru reached up, beginning to frantically toss his sticky balls at the gas-masked figure while Todoroki reached back and readied a wave of ice. Sero and Bondo began to fire glue and tape at the figure too.

With a shout, the figure seemed to twist and crouch before he was assuredly springing across the street, dodging the first wave of the

attacks. He seemed to twist and shift, parts of his body rotating at his joints to toss him from side-to-side and redirect his motion across the asphalt around the assault of quirks.

“Fuck, that's Kaibara! He’s a close-range fighter, don't let him get near–”

Whatever else Tsuburaba was going to say was drowned out as the squeal of braking tires and the skidding of steel on steel made Minoru turn. He barely had time to take in what was happening before a blur of blue ice from Todoroki blasted out. The elemental teen had unleashed his readied ice in surprise, which is perhaps the only thing that prevented a skidding box of steel, that had detached from the driving truck, from slamming them head-on.

The cargo box also broke the line of sight with Kaibara, leaving their only information a muttered *“Holy shit”* over the comms. The team, with Minoru following with reluctance, swarmed to climb the ramp Todoroki made to reach over the cargo box.

When Minoru finally stood on to of the box, he froze with terror and nearly shit his pants.

There, bolted to the floor of the truck bed, was a fucking *Anti-Aircraft Turret.* Kaibara was grabbing and twisting, that strange twisted-body thing proving he was using his Quirk to help aim. As it swung around, Minoru could clearly make out the words **Hatsume Industries** painted in bright pink on the outside surface of two of the four boxy barrels closest to them. At the back, there were large canisters full of ammo connected with belts hanging from each.

Kaibara Sen’s voice, still distorted by his mask, called out.

“Surprise, motherfuckers.”

Todoroki instantly summoned a flowering shield of ice, diving backward. Bondo formed a wall of quick-hardening glue as he turned to cover a screaming Komori. Sero was also diving back, one arm flailing as he used the tape to yank him down and out of the line of fire.

Minoru didn't react in time.

All he heard was a sudden rapid-fire rattle; like someone had dropped the world's largest collection of balls down steel escalators, before he was engulfed in pain.

Pain and the color red.

Kaibara Sen grunted with exertion. The recoil wasn't that bad, but aiming accurately with the turret was a bitch. The 'red goo' rounds Mei had taught Momo to make (and that UA itself used in the second year gun safety-and-countering class) was harmless, really. A quick-setting, hard-coating red goo that would dry in seconds to be breathable, albeit hard to break. It was technically the evolution of paintballs. It was far more debilitating and you could still technically fight even if disabled. The fact it left bruises was par for the course and a valuable learning experience.

That was a single shot, however, and Mei had not held back with the fucking *beast* of a gun she had sent out.

Four muzzles. A firing rate of 25 rounds fired per second, *each* with a full 7,500 rounds of ammo per gun.

In Mei's words, "You have about five minutes of 'fuck that one thing in particular.' Make them count."

As he swept up, he saw the perverted little purple bitch get *slammed* with the wave of red with satisfaction.

He snapped the turret across the ice and the glue, painting both with a quick hardening shell to slow them down.

"GRAFFITI, HIT THE GAS!" he yelled, shifting the turret up and around to strafe the perch where the second team was. They were already diving for cover as he pressed back down on the triggers.

At that moment, as he smelled burning rubber from the spinning wheels, he glimpsed an inferno coming from the other side of the red-coated ice.

He strafed back and blinked at the hiss of steam as the bullets of paint *evaporated.*

And then the van was skidding away like a rocket, chased by a wall of flame twice its size.

Cursing, Sen stepped down, feet flat and stance low as he tried to stay on the back of the truck.

Luckily, that's when the incendiaries in the government building went

off.

The windows around the back lower floor of the government building blew out, a wave of flame encasing the lower level.

He could see through the inferno that Todoroki's eyes widened and he started to gesture. The three members of his team still up (though Sero was red from a shoulder down) all turned and started towards the fire.

"Good escape, but Bakugou's already been informed. He's sending people to try and cut you off at the pass. Take the next left, head to the north stash," Hacker's voice, full of glee, came over the comms. *"They'll remember how my baby performed. That was awesome!"*

As the truck went to take a corner at high speed, Sen sent a few shots down the streets, splattering the corners in case anyone got the idea to come storming around there.

"Glad you enjoyed it, Hacker. Coming up on the parking garage for entry now. Second floor down, southeast wall, yeah?"

"That's correct," Kingpin cut in. *"Come on home, boys. We have lunch ready at Woods. I think it's time to start to talk about the changes to Phase 2."*

With a grunt, Sen spun the turret so it was aligned with the rear of the truck once more, kicking a locking mechanism into place.

"Yosetsu, take us in."

"With pleasure, Sen."

And with a turn and the skid of tires on asphalt, they entered a subterranean parking lot, driving deep under the layers of parking and below the city, leaving no trace for the heroes to find.

6 days before the exam (lunch)

Izuku stood before Hatsume, watching her flip through the notes he had taken that morning just for her.

"I have to say Ten Million, you are ambitious. That's GOOD! It's fun that way!" She flipped through the books some more before her expression fell. "But I can't make some of this. Designing it would be fine, but production would take days for some of these smaller parts. The comms and computers in particular. Even the best of 3D printers

and mills can only build so much so fast and there's a waiting list for that," she sighed. "As it is now, unless you have a miracle, there is no way to get most of this done, especially considering the suits and the materials going into them."

Izuku nodded along. "Well, you see, I actually do have a miracle. Or more precisely, I have a team member with your miracle." He turned and looked at a suddenly surprised Yaoyorozu. "So what do you think, feeling 'Creative' Yaoyorozu?" He gave her a shy and genuine smile, filled with eagerness and hope.

Yaoyorozu couldn't help but laugh softly. "You can call me Momo, Midoriya. And sure, I'll help her out. But you're buying me dinner sometime soon for this."

"Wait. Explain," Hatsume said, glancing around.

"Mei, let me introduce your new best friend. This is Momo. She has a Quirk that lets her make *anything* as long as she knows its composition inside and out. All you have to do is buy her dinner," Izuku said, before looking at Momo and smiling. "And please, Momo, call me Izuku."

Hatsume froze.

Slowly she turned, looking at Momo dead on.

As the two girls began to talk, Izuku leaned back, slowly letting a breath out. He was surprised when he felt someone approach and looked to see Jirou at his side.

"That was interesting, Green. You normally aren't that suave. What's up?"

Izuku blinked and then blushed. "W-Well. I'm supposed to be the villain, right? So last night I watched a bunch of Herotube videos about famous fictional and historical villains. What makes a villain a good character? How do you make a villain threatening? What traits do villains have? I've been using them to try and act like a villain… Is that... weird?"

"That's really cool, actually. You're method acting! That's really important for a stage persona. Just remember to keep some of your personality in there too, yeah? Now come on, let's get the geeks apart, we need to head back to class soon."

Jirou stepped away and towards the girls, but Izuku was caught in thought.

‘Method acting… that might just be the key I needed to do this.’

'I just need the right script.'

What We Know, What We Plan, Lunch

Chapter Summary

The teams retreat and recover.

(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Day 1: 13 hours 38 minutes (1:38 pm, local time)

It had taken the hero teams two hours to regroup, put out the fire at the government building and sort through the rubble of both sites.

Finally, tired and low on morale, they trekked through the city towards the fake Hero Agency building they were all staying at; a skyrise on one of the four center blocks of the fake city, a full 13 stories of rooms and basic equipment and records.

Katsuki turned to address the gathered teams as they stood in the lobby. “LISTEN UP! We need to take time to rest and re-arm ourselves. Sero, Hagakure, head up to the medical bay. Set a damn alarm for six hours so that you both can get back in this godforsaken game of tag. Take time to eat and go the fuck to sleep. Grapefucker got slimed and has been deemed eliminated, so feel free to eat or use anything given to him, it's all extra right now. This goes for the rest of you too: rest up. We’re going to swap to the three-team rotation we talked about on Thursday. Shiozaki, Todoroki, Tsuburaba and Iida, come with me for debriefing. We’re going to call back to HQ, see if they have an update on the whys and hows for this clusterfuck. If you’re not sleeping, your comm stays on. And if horror movie shit goes down, you fucking CALL ME, got it?” He was answered by a wave of tired agreement and grunted. “Good. Get some rest, fuckers.”

He stormed off and was followed by the squad leaders. A few minutes of wandering and exploring later, they found the “operation center,” a large room with a gleaming white conference table. Katsuki stood in front of the table as the others slumped in their seats. Iida took off his glasses to massage his eyes, Todoroki sunk down further in his seat and Shiozaki seemed to murmur a half-asleep prayer.

Katsuki synced his phone and its saved mission files with the

computer in the table. The holograms of the tables showed the current state of the city, both buildings attacked by villains sketched in red against cool blue.

“Fuck… let's take this step by step. Iida, where's the building where you lost the truck’s trail?”

Iida put his glasses back on and looked, before reaching out and tapping a building on what looked like a slow shift towards where a more industrial district would be. “Here. Uraraka and Kodai identified it as a market, ‘Yuki’s Winter Goods.’”

“And you said it was some sort of tunnel or pipe down?”

“Indeed. It was embedded into the ground and looked as if the concrete had melted around it. None of my team were suited to break through that, with the possible exception of Tsunotori.” Iida pulled his own phone, sending a picture to be displayed on the table. Suddenly, Tsuburaba blinked and leaned in.

“That's Honenuki Juzouu’s work. He softens the material, then deforms it and lets it resolidify. It’s how he tried to trap Midoriya in the Sports Festival. He’s one of the recommended students, skilled as well as smart.” Tsuburaba also pulled out his phone, bringing up his classmate’s profile and linking them to the current investigation on the table.

The meeting continued like this. Each piece of evidence they found and each sighting of a villain was marked. Recordings of the original live stream and the explosion warning were linked, along with whatever technical data their phones had recorded.

In the end, they had four confirmed villain sightings. Tokoyami Fumikage and Kuroiro Shihai at the bank, Midoriya Izuku over the live-stream and Kaibara Sen at the government building. They also had another seven unconfirmed sightings; the five other people who left the two vans in the original security footage (three at the government building, two at the bank, all of them disappearing in the destruction of their buildings), and the person driving the truck with the turret (“I couldn't tell who it was. The windshield was tinted dark.”). Finally, there were the signs of Honenuki Juzouu at the underground entrance.

There were eleven villains they had seen. That left four they hadn’t.

Katsuki pulled up the city infrastructure files and began to overlay

them. Quickly, everyone saw the connection.

“Sewer system. Eww, that has to be gross.” Shiozaki cringed, imagining what it would be like to deal with sewage in her vines.

“Not really. The city is fake. The infrastructure would have to be damn near unused. But what that means is that the villain team has a network of five-foot diameter tunnels that lead below *every* building in the city. But look at this. The market? It's over a larger cistern and flooding chamber. That's more than large enough to hide a truck if you could get it in there. Aside from that, the other two buildings don't make sense. The tunnels are more than ten feet below the basements in each building. You’d have to have heavy equipment to move that much material and even then it’d be hard to get through.”

“Or Honenuki could soften it and you could literally claw your way through,” Tsuburaba muttered, his own screen pulled up across the table as he reviewed the events of the government building once more. He paused. He had a video feed from an intersection camera and paused it to look at the picture of Kaibara Sen on the truck. Then he noticed something. “Hold up. What’s… *Hatsume Industries?”*

Across from him, Iida froze.

The villains were gathered, sitting in a restaurant and enjoying a fine meal prepared by both their illustrious leader and a few other members of the team. Awase Yosetsu had helped out in the kitchen, same with Monoma Neito and Aoyama Yuga.

Soon, everyone was enjoying a massive pot of sukiyaki with plenty of toppings for everyone to choose from.

Izuku himself sat on the counter leading to the kitchen, putting him ‘slightly’ taller than the rest of the villains, with the exceptions of Shouji Mezou and Kouda Kouji, who were leaning against the walls nearby and conversing quietly.

Finishing his bowl, he saw that most of the teams were close to finishing or done. He pulled out a bottle of water and sipped it as he waited for the teams to finish. Smiling between sips, he picked up bragging from the ‘techie’ table about the explosives that Yaoyorozu Momo and Hatsume Mei designed, and how Neito helped with production to an interested Ashido Mina and Jirou Kyouka.

Another table is nothing but low murmurs, the more gothically

inclined of his team relaxing and chatting. It was composed of Honenuki Juzouu, Tokoyami Fumikage, Kuroiro Shihai, and Yanagi Reiko. They looked remarkably relaxed, dressed in shades of black, grey and red. Really, even with the dressed-up nature of their outfits, something that some of the others had issues wearing without feeling out of place, the table looked remarkably carefree and stylish.

The third table had the last of the members conversing quietly, though two of them looked dead on their feet. Awase Yosetsu was tired from the stress of driving through a battlefield and Kaibara Sen had been tense and tightly wound for nearly the last four hours since he had to bluff the heroes. They were chatting quietly with Aoyama Yuga and Kendou Itsuka. Across from them was an empty seat, Con Man having left earlier to get some more sleep, which was fine - his act wasn't until midnight anyway.

As seconds and desserts were finished off, Izuku clapped his hands.

"We have done really well, ladies and gentlemen. Everything is going *better* than I scheduled. We already have three of the fifteen objectives and we all know where a fourth sits, for now." A low chuckle ran through the room. Everyone knew where the fourth was and why they hadn't taken it yet. It was a trap unlike any other, and would no doubt put them on the back foot. "Beyond that, thanks to the firepower of Mei, our wonderful Hacker, we even took out the slimeball Mineta!" At this all the girls clapped, and Kyouka even wolf-whistled in Sen and Yosetsu's direction, getting blushes and mock bows from the two boys.

"However, from now on we have to be better. Bakugou is already regrouping with his team, and likely preparing to respond violently and drastically to anything we do. As such, we're going to phase two. Duo operations." Izuku looked around and saw everyone glance at their designated partner. Good. They better have remembered after three days of practicing combinations.

"Yosetsu and Sen, Fumikage and Shihai, and Juzouu and Itsuka. The six of you can go get some rest. You've all been busy and stressed. Mina and Reiko, you two can also rest for a while, but no sleeping. We still need you for an entry in about an hour. After that, feel free to return to here or to the Tower and get some sleep." He checked they were all fine with that and turned to the teams of true importance for this next part.

"Kyouka, Momo, Neito and Yuga, your targets are up next. I've already sent you the plans. Remember, keep them from seeing you.

Hacker will be available for support and research, make sure to ask if you have any questions. *Be careful.* You are all key to the endgame. With the heroes ensconced in their base, we have a window of opportunity, but the moment they get an alert all of you will be in deep shit." Izuku leaned forwards, face serious.

The four nodded, faces grim and determined.

"Kouji, feel free to relax, you can pick back up searching when your allies actually have a lead. We have enough places to check now as it is. Mezou, Mei, head to the Tower. I'll follow in a few minutes, just gonna clean up here."

The last of the villains filed back, taking the stairs behind the bar down into the basement, where an entrance into the sewers had been formed. A few minutes later, Izuku put the last of the dishes down and looked at the figure lurking in his kitchen.

"Alright, how did the hero investigation go?"

"They know the basics and because of Iida, they know about the sewers. Beyond that, the teachers have yet to update them. I figure it's a matter of time."

"Thanks, Extortion. Return to the hero base. Don't let anyone know you left."

"Of course."

With quiet footsteps, the figure vanished from the restaurant. Izuku finished setting the dishware away and paused. He looked in the mirror, adjusting his hat and straightening his outfit, eyes drawn to the camera he knew was in the corner of the room.

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players… or perhaps they all get played."

Turning off the lights, Izuku left.

The first act was over. Now onto the interlude.

6 days before the exam (after class)

Izuku looked at his list. In the last four hours, the students of the hero classes had taken sides. After an argument with the rest of his class, Monoma had joined the villains, followed by a nervous Kendou. A few

minutes of conversation later, and the information that Momo would be on the same team helped improve Kendouu's mood tremendously. With her help, he had talked a bit and gotten both Awase and Kaibara to join him, while Tokoyami apparently asked if the 'ghouls' of Class 1-B, wanted to join him. Seems that Honenuki, Kuroiro, and Yanagi were all too pleased to accept the offer.

Tokoyami himself had joined up of his own volition, deciding that 'to work in the night would be a masterful use of his skills.' Izuku was quite happy to agree.

He had been surprised not long after, when both Aoyama and Kouda joined, each preferring not to elaborate on their choice.

Then… there was the Bakusquad's self-destruction. It had been fairly quick, but Izuku caught the start of it. Kaminari had suggested some sort of plan to celebrate winning, leading with something like '...since Bakugou is leading us there's no need for us to really do anything, is there? He'll straight-up bulldoze the other team!'

Ashido had gotten snarky in return, talking about how that didn't help at the beginning of the year. Thankfully, Bakugou had been visiting Class 1-B at the time. Not long after, Ashido had approached Izuku and when Bakugou came back, he was frustrated to see her sitting on the 'villain' side of the room.

He was somewhat saddened that most of his friends were going to be heroes, but Iida wanted to prove himself after the Stain incident. Todoroki had mentioned that Endeavor had all but commanded he win as a villain and refused to give the firefly bastard any satisfaction. Uraraka joined the heroes to fight *him* and stated it quite clearly. It only stoked Izuku's own fire in the end.

Then there were the secret weapons. Hatsume was the easier of the two. Bringing up how it would let her field test her babies. How it would be a demonstration to the rest of the hero course. How her equipment could be used practically. The sheer variety they could use and show off, compared to a simple fight like the Sports Festival... she caved in minutes.

His other secret recruit was a harder sell, but the idea of training and getting one over on the best of the hero course and UA's own biased testing by showing just how powerful they could be… well.

Needless to say 'Con Man' was happy to join his ranks.

Beyond that, Izuku was in his element. It wasn't a sudden duel in a back alley or a test with no prep time. This was a chance to fully abuse tactics, Quirk interactions, and psychological warfare.

Izuku hit the ground running.

First off, while the team was finalizing he got everyone's numbers, typing them up and linking to a chat.

Then he sent out info packets. Instructions, useful resources to read up on and questions about what exactly their limits were. Some of them he sent full books of resources, like Momo. For others, like Ashido, he sent more creative video examples, with more interesting to look at and easy to understand tools and information.

But there was someone he wanted to talk to about this in person.

So after class, he asked Shouji to join him in a simple walkthrough of the training ground they would use.

And there, the two sparred. Izuku asked questions, pushed him. Shouji had come to Izuku first, had asked, had pushed, had wanted to win. He gave Izuku that first push to get out of his own mind, to actually act and decide to play the villain.

He would pay that back by making Shouji a dangerous foe, and an invaluable ally.

Chapter End Notes

> If you really like this story (or any of my other writings...) I did start a discord.

Interlude: The Observers (Part 1)

Chapter Summary

> The Teachers provide input and reactions, as well as showing the whole story.

Day 0: 5 hours, 5 minutes (5:05 am, local time)

Shouta looked over the rest of the teachers from where his sleeping bag was resting against the wall. Most of them were freshly awake, and carried small bags of snacks and notebooks to take notes in. Every year this was as much of a test of the teacher's attention spans and will to stay awake as it was of the student's skills and capabilities.

Shouta himself had woken up nearly three hours earlier to help oversee the villain team as they initiated the first of their plans. He was unusually prepared for this year as well. Inside his sleeping bag, he had stashed plenty of caffeine-heavy drinks, a pair of thick, unused notebooks and a smaller notebook given to him by the villain team called ‘Stage Directions.’ That had been a trip to read.

Honestly, when he originally proposed that Bakugou and Midoriya be chosen for the hero and villain roles, he had done so with the hope that putting them in positions of leadership would dull their bad habits. Midoriya was far too meek and willing to take a backseat in planning when it wasn’t life or death and Bakugou was far too reckless and brash.

Then Midoriya Izuku turned around with steel in his eyes.

The problem child had talked to him several times after classes, each time to confirm whether something would be stopped or counted against him by the teachers. Like the two students from Support and General Studies he recruited. Or the requisitions for permission to use firearms loaded with the RG13 rounds. And the requisitions for a practical ammunition demonstration.

Each time Midoriya looked more and more confident, more focused and determined.

Then this morning, just after 2 am, the fucking problem child calls him and says that his team is ready to start.

He showed up to see the entirety of the villain team perched on the walls and front steps of UA.

For a split second, as they looked up at him, dressed to kill in suits and dresses, with armor and weapons stashed and ready...

As Midoriya looked up and his eyes glinted green in the half-light...

He pushed the memory of feeling in danger away.

With nothing better to do, he let the villains in and watched them set up. The villains outfitted and stashed supplies in the three trucks, before half of them practically slept where they stood. Midoriya, and three of his allies took a much more low-key sedan into the city proper to set up the villain lair, armed with suitcases and briefcases of supplies.

Shouta, in turn, looked over the cameras. The entire city, every room, every street and back alley and sewer tunnel was hooked up to cameras. Those that were classified as 'public' would be available to the heroes, but the villains would need to hack their own camera feeds to use them.

Power Loader and Shouta had been very clear that while blocking out the hero team feed was fine, the teacher's connection was to be left untouched.

As such, while the rest of the teachers filed in, finding places on couches and at the counter for the dry bar, Shouta panned through the cameras. He set half the screen on the resting villains, the other on the newly-assembling Heros.

Low mumbling started, before the heroes turned towards Principal Nedzu, dressed in a green money counters cap. "All right! Place your bets folks, place your bets!"

The teachers called out bets and wagers. Some of them were cash, but others were offers of dealing with detentions or grading homework for one another.

Shouta himself called out only one bet.

"One month of detention watching and homework covering, and 20,000 Yen, on the villains breaking Endeavor's record win."

Present Mic turned, mouth dropping. "WHHATTT?? SHOOUTTAA???

YOU NEVER–” Shouta’s red-eyed gaze cut off the rest of Yamada’s tirade.

“I placed my bet. Deal. With. It. Now shut up, the villain team is getting ready to move.”

With that, the teachers settled back into their seats.

The first live-stream started.

Day 1: 6 hours, 12 minutes (6:12 am, local time)

The teachers were chatting about the hunter team, mainly how they needed to be reorganized.

“The issue I’m seeing,” Vlad King spoke up, “Is that for all the heroes’ combined forces, each team is far too specialized for its role. It would have been better to plan for more varied teams.”

“Perhaps. But he also had only a short period to integrate each team with each other. This may be his opening gambit, it’s possible that he will change team formations down the line,” Ectoplasm responded.

“Look, they found the manhole,” Cementoss commented, pointing to the screen with the hunter team.

“I have to admit, I was impressed with the villain team’s vanishing act. Carrying smaller travel platforms into the tunnels for the teams to reassemble was interesting and unexpected. Though without the combined abilities of Honenuki and Kendou to push the van into the office next door, they would have left quite the evidence as to where they went,” Ectoplasm commented, leaning on the couch back.

“Though simply pulling a section of bricks out by softening the mortar holding them was inspiring. Shame the heroes never noticed that,” Cementoss noted, looking over a few stills from the concealment.

“They only noticed the manhole due to the antics of Tsunotori. They were lucky on that front,” Shouta muttered, sipping at another juice pouch.

“Oh holy shit, look at the street.” Ectoplasm leaned in, pulling up a new screen off his tablet.

The heroes took in the barricade of cars, the limp bodies all too easy to imagine as injured and dead civilians.

“Look, is that Tokoyami and Kuroiro?” Power Loader looked at the two figures, now climbing up an upside-down car to the top of the wall and taking positions.

“And there's the hero team led by Bakugou,” he remarked.

Day 1: 8 hours, 45 minutes (8:45 am, local time)

The screens were divided between the battle in the street, the hold up at the government building, and the interiors of both places.

“Here, looks like the teams are closing in on three of the objectives.”

“What three?”

Nedzu tapped a controller, and three screens changed to show the items.

“In the bank vault, there is a safety deposit box with a fake skull, marked with the tag for the event and the number ‘12.’ In the government building, the left arm of a modded civil-bot is marked as number ‘4.’ In the government building is a laptop marked with a ‘5.’ The civil-bot also has to be taken intact.”

“Hostage, espionage, and vault robbery. That's three.”

The teachers continued to comment as they watched the side-teams get to work. In the bank, Jirou Kyouka, dressed in a black shirt, skirt, boots, and a red tie, slowly cracked the code to the vault. She was guarded and assisted by Monoma Neito for a short time before he hefted a bag and began to travel through the building, placing black objects on various walls and consistently referencing his phone for directions.

In the government building, a swarm of rats and flies hunted for the laptop, lead and assisted by Kouda Kouji and Awase Yosetsu. Meanwhile, Yaoyorozu Momo and Aoyama Yuga tracked down and detained the civil-bot. Yaoyorozu strapped it to a quickly-created gurney as Aoyama began to take the bag he held and head for the basement.

Videos of the subterranean crew, consisting of Honenuki Juzou and Kendou Itsuka, showed them working together to craft escape tunnels, traveling from point to point in the city using the motorized platforms. At the same time, Yanagi Reiko and Ashido Mina traveled

along their own, more circuitous route. Ashido melted the way into locked power boxes and security feed lines, while Yanagi hooked up countless connectors from her bag to each, allowing another team, the villain leaders, to begin hacking every building security feed they could find.

Yanagi also used her poltergeist powers to slowly lift smaller devices into small corners and into the streets through storm drains across the city.

Day 1: 11 hours, 15 minutes (11:15 am, local time)

The duo guarding the bank retreated, with the villains carrying their objective through a new underground entrance and out into the tunnels, Monoma leaving one last attachment at the roof of the tunnel.

The objectives at the government building were also almost completely collected, the location of the laptop already narrowed down to a single set of rooms the villains were rummaging through, though Awase had jogged to the box truck, joined with Yaoyorozu as they hopped in the back.

The teachers were interested but somewhat unenthused. Even the Dark Shadow and Black Quirk combo had only kept their interest for a short time. And while Power Loader seemed to realize what Monoma was doing, he had declined to share the information with the others.

However, when Izuku's bomb call began, Shouta could only smirk as the bank they had prepared to assault blew sky high.

A round of curses and exclamations from all but Shouta, Nedzu, and Power Loader erupted. The fact that they were smirking was not unnoticed.

"WHAT THE HELL HA–" Yamada cut off under a red stare, and Power Loader cut in.

"I spent a long afternoon talking construction and demolition charges in a quick certification class with both young Yaoyorozu and Monoma, and signed off on their use during this. Along with a few other forms for extra equipment usage and materials."

"That's against the rules, isn't it? We weren't supposed to help the villains or hero–" Snipe drawled from where he sat at the counter.

“They didn't mention the exam, they simply had me sign off for their certifications. I got an email from Nedzu a few hours later to sign off on use in the practical... They brought it up in the context of learning for the future.”

“Okay, what the fuck?!” Came the yell from Midnight, drawing everybody’s attention to the massive truck-mounted artillery piece.

“I signed off on that too!” Nedzu commented in the sudden silence, only punctuated by the rat-a-tat of the gun firing, and the violently cut-off scream from the purple-outfitted Mineta.

“Ouch.” Ectoplasm frowned, already sending one of his clones on standby at the edge of the city down to retrieve the kid from his red goo coffin and take him to Recovery Girl. “That's gotta hurt.”

“Little pervert fucking deserves it,” came the mutter from Midnight, leaning back as the truck went careening down the road.

“Though, it feels like the end of the foreplay is coming up,” she noted with a smirk.

Day 1: 13 hours, 45 minutes (1:45 pm, local time)

The teachers watched Bakugou's meeting with his team and his sorting of information. Then they watched the meeting with Izuku and the villains. In the end, they noted there were plenty of differences between the two.

“Midoriya is acting very social with them, like a concerned friend and leader for his troops. He made them food and Bakugou... despite how his temper is more reigned in, it’s still making him curt and dismissive. That's a mistake,” Hound Dog noted, watching as the villains dispersed.

Then the surprise guest stepped out and the teachers were dumbfounded.

“Is… is this even allowed?” All Might muttered, flipping through his book.

“The rules never said no, at least considering the circumstances,” admitted Nedzu, “Though I do admit, after this year we may have to refine those rules a bit more...”

On the screen, Izuku smiled before he paused and looked up. It took a few seconds for him to find it, but he gave a small nod to the camera, a knowing smirk dancing across his lips.

Heists, Coffins, and Fuck-Ups

Chapter Summary

As Night falls, Conflict brews.

(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Day 1: 17 hours and 42 minutes (5:42 pm, local time. One hour until sunset)

“Shit.”

Momo, Neito, Yuga, and Kyouka all looked at the case with a combination of focus and annoyance.

Their target was sitting there. In the middle of the museum's grand showcase.

“A fucking coffin. Really?” Kyouka called out. She was listening to the area, checking if they were in the clear. Yuga was with her in a silver and black outfit with a short red shoulder cape wrapped around him, his torso was covered with armor connected to the silver focusing array. The loose fabric and puffy sleeves looked somewhat French, with silver patterns that caught the light.

Across from them, their companion team was wearing more... risqué outfits. Neito wore black sleek pants and boots, an open black vest, and a pair of black gloves, his head topped by a felt flat-topped cap. It made him look one part page boy, one part male stripper. Momo wore a sleek red backless dress and black thigh-highs, with an array of pouches across her hips. For shoes, she wore stylish black boots that reached her knees, leaving several inches of black satin stockings above them, before leaving a gap between her dress and the edge of the satin. The two were currently trying to spoof the case security for the exhibit. The coffin, emblazoned with the distinctive number 13 over the UA seal, rested in the center of a massive exhibit on zombies. Clearly a joke exhibit too, like the rest of them (the exhibits on UFOs, the Mad Science of the 22nd Millennia and Mothman were notable). The Support Class clearly built them for fun.

“We have less than two hours until the system swaps to a high-security lockdown for the night. But if we disturb the exhibit, then we’re already fucked.”

Momo and Neito both made their way back.

“Well, good news? The coffin is unanchored. If we get it, we can just carry it out. The issue is the motion sensors. If anything else gets disturbed, it triggers an alarm. If the glass shatters, it triggers an alarm. If the laser grid over the coffin is set off, it triggers an alarm,” Momo explained, already texting the data they had gathered to Hacker and the Tower.

“Seriously? What about having Hacker turn off the alarms?”

A beep preceded Mei’s voice over the comms.

“I wish I could, but this is definitely older students at work. It's awesome, but several of these tricks I don't have counters for. First off, the alarm uses what's referred to as an interrupt system. If you break the circuit or interrupt the signal, three separate receivers go set the alarm off. If one of the receivers goes offline, the other two set the alarm off. I can't disable it from here. If I was there, I might be able to delay it, but no dice.”

Kyouka, Momo, and Neito stared at the display. It was five meters on the side and a little under a meter tall. The area was covered in a massive pile of gravestones and fake zombie pieces behind glass. In the center was the coffin.

Yuga tapped the base of the display and then tilted his head. Kyouka looked down and listened as he tapped again. *‘That's hollow,’* she thought. “Umm.. if we can't go over, because of the lasers, or through, due to the motion sensors… can we go under?” Yuga asked, looking at the case with a critical eye.

The other three paused and Yuga grinned, opening the panel carefully to reveal a smooth wooden surface under the exhibit.

“Momo, Neito. Do you have laser pointers in your repertoire?”

A few minutes later they were set. Momo and Neito marked off the exact lines of where the box was, using the lasers to show it across the underside of the box. With careful hands, Yuga marked off the square with a marker, then had them re-check his measurements as he stared at the underside of the case.

He was handed a knife, and Kyouka popped the corners with careful taps of her ear jacks.

“Alright. Start nice and slow, Sparkle, we have time.”

He nodded and took the chisel-shaped knife up, digging it through the wood slowly. He had the better part of an hour to get through this and didn’t want to mess it up.

Izuku looked at the screen as the feed from the four-man team came through. The team was working well, though this was a far more intensive theft then he had originally planned. He glanced at the diagram of the building.

Behind him, Mezou napped on the couch, hat over his face to keep the light from the holo-screens from waking him.

Izuku began to pace, hand over his mouth to muffle his mumbling.

Seventeen floors, with the top three being a massive amphitheater and museum, where the team was currently pulling their heist. The only reason they were getting away with this was the fact they had already ordered the museum closed earlier that day. Mei had hacked the system and sent a ‘museum closing’ message over the civil-bot network. However, the system itself ran off a radio-updated internal clock and as such couldn't be hacked to keep the museum closed. The result? A three-hour window where the teams could get in, get the goods, and get out.

Izuku zoomed out and looked at the picture of the building once again. The triangular window scheme was nice, but the sphere of triangular panels made the massive glass dome of the top seem almost like a disco ball. He tabbed through some of his different cameras feeds, finally settling on a mixed display of the crew at the museum, and the exterior of the Hero Agency.

For the better part of half an hour, he watched the crew work on getting into the case without setting the alarms off.

And then things went wrong.

Yuga scored the line once more and then there was a cracking sound, an entire side suddenly shifting and pulling away from the boards.

“SHIT, HOLD IT STRAIGHT!” Kyouka called out, Yuga already pushing up to try and keep the board steady.

But it was too late.

With a creak, part of the board beneath the coffin dipped and the coffin went crashing through the rest of the exhibit.

A beat, panic already setting in.

Then the alarms went off.

Metal shutters dropped over the doorways throughout the museum, and the elevators rose up and locked into place on the top floor.

“Shit.”

Neito and Momo rushed the display. With the alarm already off, they just needed to grab the coffin and bail, and Yuga rolled out from under the display with a grimace of self-reproach.

They reached it and lifted the dark metal case, dragging it forwards, while Kyouka was already tapping her comm. “Tower, we have a fucking problem.”

The sun's last light of the day was making the sky burn like fire and Izuku cursed, adjusting the holograms as he tried to keep track of what was happening.

Izuku swore, kicking back to jar the couch and jolt Mezou awake as his eyes tracked data and images of the heroes rushing through the doors, already oriented and heading for the museum.

Headcount…

Iida, Kirishima, Tetsutestsu, Kaminari, Ojiro, Bondo and Tsunotori.

Led by Bakugou.

‘That's a heavy assault team. Could I send a team to– no. No time.’

“Mezou, get prepped for a fight and get Hacker and Con Man up and ready. The museum job just went south.”

Mezou took a second to process the words before he rolled off the couch, standing and stretching as he headed for the door.

“Have Hacker get the rifle. Grab your gear and get going. I’ll meet you at the tunnel.” Izuku was already connecting the system to the HUD in

his jester mask, tapping the connection and considering times.

“Seventeen floors at average, thirty seconds a floor, so say eight minutes. The museum is locked, they need to get out…” Tapping the comms on, Izuku started relaying orders, moving to the elevator while a monochrome green screen on the mask lenses showed the camera feeds. “Yuga, laser the gates between you and the exits. Keep them in short bursts, as much as you can handle without going over. Momo, Neito, casters and webbings on the coffin, make it easier to carry. Drop down four floors, floor 13 has the first set of offices through the stairwell. Move now. You have less than five minutes before the hero teams hit the building, hide out there as long as you can. The heroes are probably rushing the top floor first. Kyouka, you're on watch and keep the line open. My team and I are coming to provide a distraction to get you out. Keep your focus and use your heads.”

“Roger,” came four voices. Tapping the mic, Izuku stepped into the elevator, tapping the basement button as he scowled under his mask.

“Great. This is going to be a mess,” he muttered.

4 days before the exam

Midoriya stood and sighed as he looked down at the form of Neito, who cradled a broken arm. “Yeah. That's what happens. Figures. Head out to Recovery Girl, you’re done for today and we know you can’t handle my Quirk at all, even now.”

“Fucking *ow,* Midoriya. You put up with this during the tournament?” Neito panted, looking up with a wild look in his eyes. Midoriya rubbed his wrist and looked thoughtful, unknowingly displaying the white scarred flesh and twisted fingers of his final clash with Todoroki in the ring.

“Yeah. I did. A lot worse than what you’ve got now. The damage you have is diffused, spread out. Doing it in a smaller space hurts more and deals loads more damage.” For a moment, Monoma Neito could only look on in awe at the absent-minded way Izuku explained how he hurt himself.

“Alright… grab Miracle Matter on your way out and recheck the distance you can hold it, please.” Izuku was already turning away, sketching out notes in his book as he glanced at the other villain teams testing their powers.

"... Miracle Matter?" Monoma inquired, raising an eyebrow as Izuku blushed.

"O-Oh. Sorry, I meant Creati. Go grab Creati." Izuku shook his head and moved over to look at the others.

Neito looked back down, seeing the dark purple bruising that wrapped his arm from wrist to elbow. As he tagged Yaoyorozu and borrowed her Quirk, he felt at his arm.

Honestly… it hurt. He's had broken bones, but even now, ten minutes after it broke, he felt a deep throbbing ache through his arm. But that was nothing compared to the rush of power. It felt like he had stood in a tunnel as the ocean crashed through him.

With one last look at the scarred figure of his Kingpin, Neito headed to Recovery Girl.

Under Siege

Chapter Summary

> Traps, lies, armor, and orders. The villains are being pushed back, but with reinforcements on the way, can they hold out?
>
> (Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Day 1: 18 hours, 55 minutes (6:55 pm, local time)

“Kirishima, Tetsutetsu, take the ground floors up. Bondo, you run support with them. Seal off areas as you pass. Iida, Ojiro, Tsunotori, take the west stairwell to the museum floors, lock it down and figure out what they were after. Then start searching from the top down. Me and Sparky here will head to the center floors and then clear up to meet you, then we’ll all double back down to meet the ground team. GO!” Katsuki barked orders as his team closed in on the building.

After nods and muttered agreement, the teams hit the building lobby at a run. Bondo fired a quick stream of Cemedine across the elevator bank, before he followed the rest of his team through the grand doors into the ground floor. The other teams headed for their stairwells.

Iida took the stairs three at a time, engines pumping and steps sure as he raced. Ojiro simply leaped from railing to railing, zig-zagging up the stairwell center towards the top, joined by Tsunotori. She would leap several floors, land and then leap several more.

On the other stairwell, Bakugou and Kaminari were forced to take a more mundane route. They ran the stairs two at a time as they raced for the seventh floor to begin their chase.

Far above, a pale blond-haired boy sighed and tossed a can attached to a small blasting cap, a long line of string and a wireless trigger over the railing. The string quickly pulled tight, the line tied off on the lower railing of the staircase.

“Bombs away.” Neito grinned, then turned back and helped maneuver the coffin through the doors onto floor 13. Across from him, Momo

was turning and placing a second prepped can-and-cord set up on the ceiling, attached by a strip of duct tape from her pocket.

“Move it, assholes. We’ve got to get set up!” Kyouka whispered at the two creators as Yuga pulled the leading edge of the coffin through doors and into a high rise office.

“King to acquisitions squad. Defend your floor and keep the elevators intact. We’re arriving through the tunnels in four minutes. Hold off until then. Hacker suggests compound six on the doors and support structures to reinforce. Hold out on the far side from the elevator banks and clear an arena in the center. Feel free to trap the halls from the stairs.”

“Understood, King," Kyouka replied, already moving to begin.

Tenya broke into the museum entrance first and started a search of the floor, looking for messed up exhibits, broken glass or signs of a struggle. He found it easy, as there was a straight path of molten metal grates leading through the hallways. Following them, he found and marked seven variant civil-bots, their outfits and painted decorations marking them as fake security guards. Each of them had holes punched through heads or necks. He quickly compared them to memory and tapped his comms. “Alert. Two intruder identities suggested from damage in the museum location. Jirou Kyouka and Aoyama Yuga.” He looked around before adding, “Whatever they took was from the zombie exhibit. Looks like it was a centerpiece.”

“Got it, Glasses For Brains. Take a look around for a minute then start down. Sparky and I are almost at floor nine. Shitty Hair, Steel Hair, you two find anything?”

“Uhh, not yet Bakubro! Most of the lower floors are just conference rooms and cubicle cells so far. We’ve got Bondo sealing up the main exits as we go and he’s got the elevator banks done. We’re finishing the second floor now.”

“Hurry it up. Iida, get a move on.”

“Understood.” He disconnected and then turned to his team, who had been following along. “Ojiro, start from the central room, check the upper balcony. Tsunotori, clear where you can on this floor and then guard the door. I’ll start on the computers, set up an uplink to HQ so we can access the feeds.”

Denki jogged through the floor, eyes roaming as he searched. Bakugou had gone the far way around the floor. Each step sent small sparks across his skin and lights flickering brighter as he passed.

“Next fucking floor,” came the order as he and Bakugou regrouped at the stairs, heading up once more.

They rushed up the steps and Denki saw Bakugou flinch and start to turn. He turned with him, eyes barely making out something swaying in the center of the stairwell–

Then he heard a beep and a bang. He felt himself get smacked with something wet and rubbery, reflexively covering his face and closing his eyes. Long, thin lines of something unknown wrapped around and clung to his skin and clothes.

“SHITFUCKER!” Well, Bakugou sounded pissed. No surprise. Denki opened his eyes and looked around. The section of the stairwell and the next floor, both above and below, was lined with sticky green threads that reminded Denki of a spider web from hell. The feeling was reaffirmed as he tried to pull at it and it simply stuck and started to set across his limbs.

A few steps up, he heard a small explosive bang, and a set of lines fell free to tangle in the web in the center of the stairwell.

“MOTHER FUCKING BULLSHIT.” A click and then: “Glasses be on the lookout for fucking traps. Canister about four centimeters across and ten tall. Had a blasting cap on it. Filled the stairwell down here with gunk for a good ten fucking meters across cube. We’re stuck for a bit until I can blow a hole through without breaking the goddamn staircase.”

As he spoke, Denki focused and began to channel a charge through the strands closest to him, slowly making them crack and sizzle, before some of them popped, falling off his body.

The conversation with Iida cut out, and the two of them started forwards, Bakugou blowing the strands away, and Denki frying them.

“I can still hear Bakugou and Kaminari at the lower edge of my range. The trap worked and they’re stuck for a bit. Iida and his team are getting ready to come down the west stair door in less than a minute,” Kyouka called out, looking at the rest of the team.

Neito and Momo were just about finished setting up traps. Both of them were making a second cylinder trap in the other stairwell above the door.

The substance they sprayed across the door itself was a compound Mei had come up with after seeing Bondo's Cemedine in action. As a quick-drying bonding agent, it would form a thin layer of resin across the doors, practically freezing against the material and keeping them supported against impact. A quick layer of extension bars were screwed into the frame that kept the doors secured and then got resin glued to the back of the doors.

Meanwhile, both Yuga and Kyouka had cleared the cubicles back, a quick laser burst on a low setting cutting some pieces in half as they, also with a bottle of compound six, sprayed and crafted a quick set of fortifications out of the cubicle remains. They had three points of security: one simple foxhole at the end of each hall from the stairwells and a larger one backed against the private offices at the far side of what was once sea of cubicles.

As the creative duo fell back, Kyouka pulled a simple handgun from her pack and three clips of RG13 rounds. Yuga did the same and the others pulled their own skeletonized versions out of their gear, clipping parts together as their guns took shape.

Kyouka could call them all smaller handguns, based on what video games have taught her. She also knew that they were fired using a compressed air cartridge with a red goo payload on the end, spent CO2 cartridges getting kicked out the chamber.

"Boss, contact incoming."

"We're almost there. Hold out for two minutes more and be ready to move."

"We'll try," she said, pointing for Momo to trigger the doorway charges.

"Fuck!" came echoing up from one stairway, while a squeal of disgust came from the other.

"Hurry, Boss. They're at the doors."

"ReciproBURST!"

And with that, the doors began to cave in.

Izuku adjusted the long, loose jacket he wore over his suit, emphasizing his thin figure and making him seem taller. The short lifts on his boots also assisted with that illusion.

To his right, in an identical jacket, Con Man matched his pace. Assault took his left, his form all but concealed beneath the broad brim of his hat and the massive, loose high-collar navy-blue coat he wore like a cape. As he got to the maintenance room, he looked at the controls, knowing Hacker could see them through his mask cameras. He plugged her thumb drive into the security computer, the civil-bot that had been sitting there quickly bearing Assault's handprint four inches deep in its face, sparks flying before it could react and alert the hero team.

In the meantime, Izuku stepped away and popped the cover of the breakers for the building off with a flick of Full Cowl through his fingers. He looked at the array of switches.

"Which breakers?"

"Top left, flip up. Bottom center, flip down, same to the bottom left. Center is lighting and main power. I need it turned off and the far left flipped to full to keep the elevators on."

Izuku followed the instructions, Con Man and Assault were standing next to the main elevator with arms crossed, until with a click, the elevator button beeped.

"Elevators coming down. Cameras say that Kiri, Tetsu, and Bondo are about to hit the fifth floor. Baku and Kami are pushing up the stairwell to the east, and are close to the mess at the door. Iida and his team are almost through the web bomb outside their door, however, and are nearly in."

A beat passed, Izuku lowering his head, and mouth moving near silently as he thought.

He took a slow breath and he looked up, eyes gleaming under the brim of his hat.

"Alright. Here's how we're going to play it..."

4 days before the exam

Izuku was a teenager and his room reflected that.

Besides the overwhelming hero-worship, he had an array of clutter across his room most of the time. But with the last few days of surprise exercise reveals and choosing teams, his desk had become cluttered to a new level. A notebook with his team's Quirks was sitting on it, each page cross-referenced with possible combinations and tricks. His laptop was set up beside it, the screen filled with basic blueprints and a few hundred tabs with various research papers and theories.

Aside from that, there was also a large map of the fake city pinned to the wall, graciously procured by Mei from the school's servers. He had spent time mapping out the tallest buildings and points of interest. Bank, museum, government offices, hero offices. The tallest building was marked on the blueprints as a landmark, which means there was something going on there.

Izuku himself was sketching his latest revamped villain outfit design into his notebook. His laptop tabbed to a new window as he played highlights of old movies.

Movies where villains were one of the main characters.

Old superhero movies were a good start, even 200 years later, the 32 part MCU was still a good watch. Besides that, he watched some true classics. The Godfather series (both the Marlon Brando original and the 2082 remake) the entire gamut of Ocean's 11 movies (cut down to mostly heist plans and executions). He looked through fan breakdown videos about Magneto, Loki, the Joker, and many more.

On his desk was a smaller black book, marked with black ink and red cross-outs, notes on how villains acted, on what they did right and writing on how they inflicted fear and made their enemies flinch away.

He would have to make an impression. He had to hit the morale and minds of the heroes hard and fast, plant the idea that he is in command…

‘Explosives… fire… and collateral damage. I have to make the entire city a war zone. I have to take control.’

For the first time, the villain smile came effortlessly to his face.

Chapter End Notes

I have to say, Two weeks ago when I first posted this story, I did not expect the sheer level of response you've all given me. thank you for the support!

High Rise Showdown

Chapter Summary

What Goes up, must be Brought down.

(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Chapter Notes

HAPPY MOThERS DAY! Enjoy a new chapter from me to you!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Day 1: 19 hours, 12 minutes (7:12 pm, local time)

Eijirou looked around the fourth floor. “Next, and let’s hurry. It sounds like they need us upstairs soon.”

“Got it!” Tetsutetsu called, already jogging over, followed by the hulking and eerily mute form of Bondo.

They rushed up the stairs, hearing the faint sound of repetitive slams from the top floor echoing down the concrete tube to them. Eijirou really did want to go and help, to give a good showing, but Bakugou had been determined. ‘Clear the floors so there are no surprises.’

Which to be fair, the villains have offered a lot of surprises.

With that thought, the heroes entered the fifth floor.

Almost immediately, there was a change. Every floor before this had been fairly similar. Lights, cubicles, a neat arrangement of offices and tasteful artwork.

The lights on the fifth floor were off.

The team slowed and both Eijirou and Tetsutetsu triggered their Quirks, while behind them Bondo shifted his stance, more Cemedine guiling up in his maw as he readied himself for combat.

Suddenly, a light turned on across the office.

“Let's go!” Tetsutetsu cried, rushing. Eijirou ran at his side as they crashed through cubicles towards the lights. Bondo, giving a deep rumbling sound as he staggered and followed after them, stumbled

and twisted to get through the mangled mess of cubicles left in the wake of the harder duo.

They crashed through the cubicles, throwing the last few to the side as they stared at the lit office.

There, sitting at the desk in the glass-walled corner office, was Midoriya. But in front of him, leaning on the door to the office, was a figure who made them pause. Long black suit jacket, a green tie and black vest matching Midoriya's down to the red leather shoes and red gloves of his outfit. A black, full-head mask with a solid, featureless black void, with the exception of a faintly glowing green question mark.

"Welcome, heroes! Sadly, your player three has another game to play. Assault, if you would?" The man with the mask said, voice distorted but clear.

There were rapid footsteps and then a crash, making both Eijirou and Tetsutetsu flinch and half turn back. A massive, blue coat-wrapped form with a wide-brimmed tan hat slammed into Bondo from the depths of the cubicles and sent him crashing into the maze of office supplies.

"But enough about him! You two gentlemen are mine to deal with!"

Both turned back, crouching and raising fists, radiating righteous aggression. "Let's go!"

"First, the pleasantries!" He called, holding up his hands in a non-threatening manner. "I go by the name Con Man, and yourselves?"

"I'm Red Riot!" Kirishima shouted.

"And I'm Real Steel!" Tetsu echoed.

And then, everything just… began to fade away, leaving one last line echoing through their memories.

"And you both lost the game. Thanks for playing, heroes."

Mezou stood panting as the immobilized form of Bondo laid on the floor, pinned by a toppled cubicle.

His head was stuck in a trashcan, keeping him from spewing his Cemedine Quirk across the office.

Con Man approached Assault and stood at his side.

The sound of Izuku's rapid steps came up behind them. As they stepped to the side, he moved between them, pulling a larger caliber gun from his jacket and firing twice; once at the bucket, once at the chest of the glue Quirk user. "Sorry Bondo, but you're too useful to let Bakugou keep. Gentlemen, let's move. We have an appointment with our pals upstairs to attend to. Con, was auto-defenestration really necessary?"

"No, but it was funny as all hell." The distorted voice carried a clear tone of amusement.

"Good point. Assault, you good?" Kingpin turned to his left-hand man.

"Bondo was strong but aside from a few bruises, nothing major," Mezou stated, already adjusting his coat to hang correctly once more.

"Good." Kingpin approached the elevator. It opened. "Thank you, Hacker. Thirteenth floor if you would."

As the three stepped inside and turned to face the doorway once more, they got one last view of the destroyed offices. Including the two gaping holes of shattered glass on either side of the corner office. Izuku took off his mask and hat and looked at them.

The doors slid closed with a soft *ding*.

1 minute, 30 seconds earlier

"SHIT!" Kyouka cursed, ducking back as Iida and Tsunotori finally shattered their way through the door, taking out the frame in the process.

Less than a second later, she was back up around the corner, the rapid click-hiss of her gun matched by Momo's as she leaned over the other corner of the hallway. The soft crack-pop! of the red goo splattering against the remains of the threshold echoed as Iida, Ojiro, and Tsunotori dove for cover.

"Fuck off, heroes! We're sorta busy up here!"

"FOUL VILLAINS, YOU WILL CEASE YOUR WAYS AND SURRENDER TO THE AUTHORITIES. YOU HAVE NO ESCAPE," Iida called back before he zig-zagged down the hallway, diving into another doorway.

Red spatters painted the frame behind him.

“FUCK OFF!” Kyouka repeated, sending another round through the threshold and making Ojiro flinch back.

As she stepped back and reloaded, Momo stepping out to fire, she whispered into her comm. “Boss, what’s the holdup?”

“Just a moment, we’re almost done dow–” The sound of shattering glass came over the comms. “Nevermind. We’re done. Up in a bit.”

Kyouka slammed the new mag into place and stepped around, firing off more rounds as Momo took a turn to reload. Ojiro was pulling the beat and battered steel door back towards him with his tail. That was the problem.

“DIE YOU SHITTY DOOR.”

Correction. *That* was the problem.

“Sacre bleu! Monsieur Paragon is already at the porte!”

“Fuck, fall back!”

Momo and Kyouka made a break for it, with Yuga and Neito following suit across the room. All four raced for the half-built fort across the room, the girls sending potshots at the corner they had just occupied. With a bang, the other stairwell door went flying, shattered resin and broken rods still dragging the stone framework with it across the room. It shattered the glass wall of an office along the way.

Crouched behind the barricade, they watched as Bakugou, hands popping and crackling, walked around the corner. The sheer *malice* coming from his stance made the villains pause, which let the other four heroes stack up on the corners, ready to act.

“You’re all under arrest. Now we can do this the easy way and you surrender, or the *fucking HARD WAY AS I RIP YOU APART!”*

Ding

A pause, and the entire floor felt their gazes be drawn to the slowly sliding doors of the elevator surrounded by the heroes.

Red leather boots laced up past the ankle and polished to a shine stepped through the entrance. Pitch-black slacks rose under a long black coat of the same color. Hands clad in skin-tight gloves, the same

color as his shoes, clasped in front of him. The jacket parted to reveal a black vest, a bright white shirt, and a perfectly tied green tie. Above it sat a grinning mask of black on white and a low black-brimmed hat with two feathers rising from each side, each a bright acid green to compliment his hair and tie. To the left of him, his two comrades stepped in. The matching outfit and hidden identity of Con Man slouching slightly, more disheveled at his side, with a looser tie and hat lopsided over his identity-concealing mask. The mountain in the navy trenchcoat known as Assault flanked the other side.

A voice, obviously enhanced with a microphone to be clear, based on the slight distortion, spoke.

“How about my way, Kacchan?” he said, voice chipper and upbeat as the Kingpin tilted his head.

Mezou looked on as his boss pulled yet another flashy play. Drawing all the attention, getting everyone and everything in the room to look at one single person. Kingpin reveled in the attention, standing tall and proud, his focus solely on Bakugou. It truly looked like a fight for the ages was approaching.

“DEKU YOU–” Bakugou began before freezing, face falling blank.

Which is exactly what the boss wanted.

“Go jump out the window you stupid motherfucker.” The voice behind the mask was muffled, but the distortion was gone.

And it wasn’t Midoriya Izuku giving the order.

Reaching up, as Bakugou turned and sprinted at the nearest unobstructed window, the mask came off, revealing tired purple eyes and a drawn face. Then the hat and a curly green wig also came off, revealing deep purple spikes as Shinsou Hitoshi took in his work with a smile. With the shattering of glass, the biggest fighting asset on the hero team was removed from play.

“Good job, Con Man. That was easier than expected.” With a flicker of green sparks across his skin, the figure wearing the Con Man question mask stepped forwards, yanking off his mask and trading with Hitoshi for his hat back, was Midoriya Izuku.

The *actual* Kingpin, whose side Shouji had never left.

“Let’s do this.”

Before the words were out of Izuku's mouth, Mezou was already on the move. The lower two arms reached into the folds of his jacket and with two long smooth draws, the red goo equivalent of double-barrel shotguns came forth.

One swung up, already sighting on the panicky sparking mess that was Kaminari as his eyes widened, the other aimed at Iida's team's general direction.

With two pulled fingers, the gun popped with the sound of compressed gases. Kaminari barely had time to respond before he was covered across the legs and up his left-hand side, screaming in surprise and pain as the force knocked him down and back. On the other side, Iida's team dove for cover, Ojiro ducking behind the battered security door for safety as his team split to either side of the corridor.

"Acquisitions squad, bring me the coffin, if you would be so kind. Assault, give them a few hands!" Izuku called as, with a flash of Full Cowl, he kicked the remains of the first barricade on the side where Iida had come from, slamming the broken and modified cubicle mess into a surprised Ojiro and sending him flying back down the hall.

Kyouka and Momo stepped back to the corner and unloaded as Mezou stepped forwards and grabbed the coffin by the netting, pulling two straps over his shoulders and dragging the coffin like an oversized suitcase to the elevator.

The distant sounds of explosions rang out from the window as the villains rushed into the small box. As the doors started to close, Iida's screamed commands and the sound of explosions heralded Bakugou's rocket-powered entrance to the floor.

"Going down," came Hacker's voice over the intercom, before the doors shut and with a lurch, the elevator dropped faster than it was designed to.

Bakugou stared at the closed door and the number above it, which was ticking down fast. "HEAD TO THE BASEMENT!" Bakugou called to the still dazed team left upstairs, before turning and diving back out the broken window.

He flared his wrist out, using a blast to accelerate towards the ground and counting the seconds. At two seconds to impact, he flipped around and used multiple rapid explosions to cut his descent from 'violent suicide' to 'dropping off a short roof' and crouching on

contact. He instantly stood up and ran. How had he forgotten the basement? Yeah, he had thought the elevators were locked down, but apparently not. As he slammed through the doors into the first floor he booked it for the 'employees only' door next to the stairwell. He was betting– yep.

"FUCK."

Stairs to the basement for maintenance. He burst through them just as he heard a ding from further down, leaping the stairwell to land on the next landing and shoulder-checking the door with an explosive assist. The area was clear, but the sound of footsteps came from the other door across the way. A charge and another explosion was enough to get through the door.

And *there.*

No mask, not having put it back on yet, following behind his team as they filed out through the end of a long tunnel (that Bakugou would bet good money on being connected to the sewers), stood the person he most wanted to *annihilate.*

"Deku you PIECE OF SHIT!" he called, making Midoriya slow to a stop.

The other villains started to turn but he waved them on, before turning back.

"Hi, ***Kacchan."***

7 days before the exam

Izuku held up his oldest notebook and looked over one of his earliest entries. There, after his mother and her Quirk, on pages three and four, his younger-self had shakily written Bakugou Katsuki.

Kacchan was a constant for years. His profile showed up in each edition, always with more detail and proposed limitations and strengths, each time showing up with new sections; analysis of personality, analysis of fighting style, of words not to say and things not to do. Some of them were on how to avoid Kacchan.

But now...

Now he was ready to *fight back.*

He pulled out a new, black notebook. Under the cover, he wrote something simple.

"Plus Ultra."

And on the first page...

On the first page, he started writing about how to win.

It all started with Bakugou Katsuki.

Chapter End Notes

Ah, sweet sweet cliffhanger.

Grudging Sacrifice

Chapter Summary

Izuku and Bakugou square off, While the timer counts down.

(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Day 1: 19 hours, 22 minutes (7:22 pm, local time)

“Deku, you piece of shit!”

The yell echoed down the grey stone corridor, the fluorescent lighting and exposed panels above them belying that they were in a service corridor.

“Hi, Kacchan! You know, I was hoping Con Man's orders would work to keep you busy for a while longer.” Izuku turned, eyes cold as he looked at Bakugou down the corridor. He reached up and adjusted his hat slightly. Behind him, the villains dragged the coffin through the doors, several of them shooting worried glances at their leader.

With the tensing of his fists, the sound of crackling fireworks filled the room. Bakugou tensed and readied for the fight.

“I’m going to end this fucking exercise. Right here. Right now,” Bakugou growled, hand flashing out and sending a burst of light and sound echoing through the corridor. A flashbang, designed to daze and confuse. Bakugou was testing the waters.

With a shrug and a spin, the suit jacket intercepted the explosion; muffling it but leaving the cloth jacket smoldering and in tatters.

At the end of the corridor, Izuku tilted his head, eyes traveling from the cloth to Bakugou, before he gently tossed it and let it land at the base of the cement wall to the side. Izuku began to fold the sleeves of his white button-up shirt up, cuffing them above his elbows to reveal the scarred skin and tight muscle. His forearms were already crackling with faint lines of green and red as One for All pulsed through him.

“Really? You think that you can take me? Right here, right now?” Izuku mocked, before reaching out a hand to the wall and slamming his fist through a glass-covered red metal trigger. He yanked down, all but ripping it from the wall, the motion etched with a glimmer of green energy. “Let’s see it, then!” The ring of a fire alarm triggered

and with a hiss the sprinklers lining the hall burst to life.

With a growl, Bakugou realized what the play was.

Mixing his sweat with the water would weaken his explosions. The near-rain in the corridor would chill them both, lessening the sweat he could output regardless. That meant he only had two heavy blasts: the stored sweat in the gauntlets. He either had to lead with that or save them for a surprise down the fight.

He chose to lead.

He rushed forwards, getting closer. In response, Izuku rushed back. His face and arms crackled with a faint aura of tightly regulated power, water streaming off his stupid hat as they neared each other.

The two met with roars of effort and a flash of power.

Iida all but staggered down the last of the stairs, looking around. The fire alarm was going off, for some reason, and he could barely hear over it. A battered Ojiro and a focused Tsunotori were trailing as he looked around, reaching up to tap his comm. “HQ, come in, this is Iida. HQ, come in.”

“This is HQ. Iida, are you okay? I’m getting crazy signals from the security system of the building. I got those feeds you wanted. Is something on fire?” The slightly nervous ramblings of Kodai came over the comms.

“I don't know, but listen; get the others on watch moving and wake up someone to watch the monitors. They need to get here, *now.* Kingpin is **here,”** Iida spoke tersely, already running around and trying to listen for the faint sounds of explosions *(below him?)*. “We need back up. NOW!”

“On our way,” Kodai confirmed, the sounds of her moving from the console coming through before she cut the connection.

"Ojiro, look for the lower floor team. I doubt Kirishima and Tetsutetsu went down easy. Tsunotori help me find a way down."

The two leaders lashed out.

Fists and weakened explosive blasts slammed against the walls as the two once friends, now enemies, fought.

Splashes of water were kicked up with each step. The snap and hum of superpowered blows being exchanged filled the air with each dodge and parry. The clanging explosions and the pulse of green lights pushed each block. Connecting fists moved faster and faster and *faster*. All of these things marked the anthem of their fight.

Midoriya ducked around a right, catching Katsuki's arm and twisting, slamming him face-first into the wall.

Katsuki swore and spun back out of the grip, arm scraping along the wall as he twisted and swung his left grenade gauntlet, aiming at Deku.

With a shout, he set his stance to hold against the recoil and pulled the trigger.

"DIE SHITTY DEKU!" He glanced up and saw Midoriya lunge, not away but *towards Katsuki,* hat held in hand as he brought it down on the nozzle of the gauntlet.

The explosion blew them both back.

After a few seconds to regain his footing, Katsuki looked down. Where his gauntlet had once been now stood only cracked metal wreckage attached to the armored bracer which had protected his wrist.

He looked up, watching the quickly dissipating smoke around Midoriya as the green-haired Kingpin stepped through the curtains of water provided by the sprinklers. The hat he held in his hand smoked, the feathers nothing but ragged tufts.

Yet the hat itself was intact. It had taken his strongest explosion full-force without tearing apart.

"I really do have to thank Hacker for this. She came up with a material resilient enough to redirect your explosions." Deku gave a bloody grin and set his hat back on his head, water running down his face from his green hair, strands plastered to his face. There was a second of stillness, both of them tensing to fight before with a flicker of green Izuku got in *close*.

The two once more traded blows back and forth, but with only one gauntlet left and soaked to the bone by the sprinklers, Katsuki was practically Quirkless. A series of jabs to his arms and shoulders left him gasping.

Midoriya ducked low, kicking out Katsuki's footing before shoulder-checking him to the ground. As Katsuki tried to reorient himself and get his breath back, he found himself pinned, the right half of his face submerged in the pooling water. Deku's knee was in the center of his lower back and his gauntleted arm was painfully twisted up and back, leaving him panting and spitting water as he tried to catch his breath.

"You know, I find the irony here almost *cathartic."* The soft voice of Deku came to him. "Not because you're the hero and I the villain, but because this exercise has proven something I've always believed." Katsuki twisted and struggled as he set off as large an explosion as he could. He rolled to the side and up into a crouch, arms coming up on reflex up to block a flickering green knee that shoved him up to his feet.

"What do you FUCKING KNO–" A snapped right hook slammed into Katsuki's cheek, sending him staggering across the hall before he came back. His fists swung in heavy haymakers as he tried to *shut Deku UP!*

"I know that you are obsessed with being 'Number One.' I know you think that heroism is a competition, that being the best *means* something." Katsuki screamed and lashed out, making Deku stagger back, a bruise forming on one bloodied cheek. He spun around with the hit and came back to a slam of a glowing foot into a hastily raised guard. It sent Katsuki staggering back once more.

"Being Number One? It never mattered in the same way to me. I appreciate the title, the meaning behind the words." Katsuki raised his remaining arm cannon, trying to aim through the blood stinging his eyes, but Midoriya was already in close. He kicked the cannon out to the side as he choke-slammed the blond into the wall.

For the first time, they stood eye to eye, face to face since the start of the exercise. Blood-red eyes bored into glowing acid-green ones.

Not Paragon and Kingpin, black and white.

No. Deku and Kacchan stared into each other eyes, both locked in a struggle.

"There are heroes and there are villains. That's the fight you should worry about. Number One? It's a joke. A public opinion piece ran by gossip magazines that worry more about sales than merit. I'd rather be a 'Symbol of Peace,'" Deku said, voice soft, private.

Before Katsuki could even consider a response, Deku reached out,

yanking his still gauntleted arm-cannon down the hallway back towards the museum building and pulled the trigger with a swift motion.

Across the entrance to the tunnel a wall of ice caught the shot, shattering because of the blast. Midoriya stepped back and Katsuki swayed forwards, breathing deep and coughing from the chokeslam.

Mei looked over the AR monitors, cursing as she directed the acquisitions squad through the tunnels to the drop-off for the coffin. Mezou was with them moving the coffin, but Larceny and Con Man had both stayed back to wait for Izuku. In the meantime she looked at the rifle next to her, cursing the fact that Izuku had told her not to shoot anyone who wasn't on the target-of-opportunity list. Beyond that, Ojiro had finally gotten Kirishima out of the car he had been entombed in, and they were both helping to pull Tetsutetsu out from the half-meter deep hole he caused in the pavement.

She had sent a warning to Izuku about the backup team of heroes but hadn't had a chance in hell to stop them. Not with Todoroki there.

Regardless, all she could do now was grit her teeth and hope that Izuku could pull out a win. The fight so far had sounded, and looked, brutal over the security monitors. She could only imagine how the teachers were reacting.

A green lightning-laced spartan kick sent Bakugou flying back down the hallway, only to be caught by the combined efforts of Shishida and Fukidashi, while beside them Shiozaki and Tsunotori readied to fight.

Yet the biggest threat to Izuku stood before the cluster of heroes.

Todoroki stood next to Iida, both of them tense. Down the hall, Izuku chuckled before standing up straight. Gently, his hands reached up to touch his bleeding lip and poke at the bruise across his jaw. His eyes were focused on the heroes.

“Well. Six on one. Seven, if Bakugou still counts, but considering how soaked he is, gonna say not.”

“F–FUCK off *Deku,”* Bakugou choked out, before falling into a coughing fit, holding his neck.

“And the bruised throat, can’t forget that.” Izuku nodded amicably.

“SURRENDER NOW KINGPIN. YOU CANNOT ESCAPE,” Iida thundered, the statement backed by a rumble of engines and a tensed stance. Beside him, Todoroki swirled with traces of fire as ice wreathed the ceiling, sealing off the sprinklers.

Izuku chuckled but hid a wince. Bakugou hit *hard* and he was now sporting a few aching ribs and jaw. Not to mention his knuckles were bruised and swelling from the punches against the grenade gauntlets. The gloves had helped but these weren’t the special ones for Kacchan.

He eyed them, options from what he had ready rolling through his mind. He didn’t know how many of his backups or prepared plans were even close to ready, and his earpiece was missing. Lost in the fight, most likely. It was looking more and more like he was going to have to bluff or connive his way–

“Excuse me, boss!” A flash of blond showed Monoma Neito, codename Larceny, stepping forwards, hand already resting on Izuku’s shoulder.

“Sorry about this Boss, but your taxi is waiting and you are far too important to lose here.”

At that moment, green met grey. Izuku realized that Larceny had touched the side of his neck.

“Wait, LARCE–” With a glowing surge of green and silver lightning, Izuku was lifted and sent flying back through the tunnel to the entrance to the underground, only to be roughly caught by the slim form of Con Man. Izuku’s eyes were panicked, green staring out with glowing fire.

“See ya, Boss. Stay safe, yeah?” Neito grinned back down the hall at Izuku, throwing his boss a wink, before the door started to close.

“WAIT– FUCK– NEITOOOO,” echoed his voice as the doors slammed shut.

Neito bit off a hiss, looking at his now broken left arm. It was quickly turning black and blue from the damage. He turned to look at the heroes, who were standing there in shock. Neito chuckled, though the pain made the sound sharp and shaky. “Well. I still have an arm, so let's see if I can copy my boss, yeah, two for two?”

Todoroki was already widening his eyes as Neito drew his arm back, taking aim down the hallway at the heroes. A quick rush of ice was thrown up and the heroes stepped back and started to brace

themselves, ice forming thick walls and rushing down the corridor towards him.

"You know what our teachers say." Neito grinned, green light surging down his arm. "Go Beyond. **Plus. *Ultra.***"

Neito swung in a full-body motion forwards and roared. He unleashed a punch aimed not at, but above the heroes, at the ceiling and into the lobby of the skyscraper. He watched the water around him turn into mist in the shockwave's pressure, walls cracking from the edge of the force. The ceiling shattered under the force of the hit, caving out and away from the source of the pressure.

Then the pain hit and he blacked out for a few seconds. Trying to cradle his broken arms as the pain consumed him.

A beat, anywhere from a few seconds to half a minute.

Neito blinked to clear the tears from his eyes, looking out and up at the ruins of the lobby. The angled, several meter thick ice wall that had been built to shield the heroes quickly began to have a hole melted through it. Above them, the concrete ceiling had been shattered and pushed back, the floor of the lobby bucking and bursting through the front door, the associated lobby wall and a good portion of the neighboring second story wall.

Even through the night, Neito could see that the windows across the street had shattered from the force.

He winced at the fact that his arms felt like they were on fire and staggered forwards, kicking a seat into place that had fallen from the front lobby; a couch now missing half its length. As it settled back onto its two left feet and the broken center resting on the shattered concrete, Neito breathed a deep sigh and the ice barrier cracked and shattered. In less than ten seconds, he found himself facing the seven heroes, newly ruffled from his grand hurrah.

“Well. I surrender.” Neito smiled, slightly manic. “Though I can’t quite raise my arms to gesture right now.”

Across from him, seven pairs of eyes narrowed.

“Damn. Tough crowd.”

Izuku caught his breath as they finally reached far enough that heroes

couldn't catch them. The tunnel network around the museum was filled in with resin bombs, and rigged tunnels collapsed behind them, traps going live. The green-haired leader looked at the purple brainwasher across the pipe from him.

“Think I sold the performance?”

“Yeah, very melodramatic. A villain sacrificing himself for the cause, the leader grieving the loss of a subordinate.” Con Man chuckled, tossing the white and black mask of the Kingpin back across the tunnel. “I think Larceny is going to be right where we want him. I gave him the rundown and he loved the plan.”

“Good.” Izuku pulled the mask on, voice suddenly coming off far more sinister through its distortion. “I hate that we had to play this out, but it does mean we are one step closer. In fact, I would even say that we’ve now begun moving into the mid-game phase. Hmmmm… Contact base, get teams sorted. We’re going for the rush.”

3 days before the exam (Musutafu Ward)

Hitoshi and Midoriya sat at a counter. The coffee shop was open until midnight and the hour was fast approaching. He and Midoriya had talked ‘business’ as it was. So, the two were now simply enjoying the calm atmosphere, coffee and tea cups littering the table as much as paper and pens did. Hitoshi sipped his tall dark espresso, eyes soft from their usual mania, as he looked over a few notes he had made. Hitoshi considered what was happening, how close he had become to Midoriya’s master plans, and felt a rush of familiar anxiety.

The words slipped out.

“Why me?”

Midoriya blinked, eyes widening as he sucked down another mouthful of creamy frappe coffee. “…In what context?” He tilted his head.

“The exercise, the huge game you’re playing, the plans and routes we can take. Why are you telling to *me?”* Hitoshi emphasized by tapping his finger on the notebook’s title ‘Stage Directions’ in the center of the table. “I’m not even in your class. Hell, we only started meeting up after the Sports Festival and your internship because we both suffer insomnia and prefer to be productive at ungodly hours of the night. Why make me your second, your field commander?”

There was a pause. Midoriya swallowing another sip of his drink and then leaning back, arms crossed as he stared at Hitoshi.

“Because I trust you. I trust you to know, better than anyone else I can bring in on this, how far is too far.” Midoriya looked Hitoshi dead in the eye, and said, with as much honesty, purpose and pleading as he could. “I trust, that if I get too into the persona of a villain, you’ll snap me out of it. Not just because your Quirk *can* but because I trust you *will.* I know that you dislike the idea of being a villain. That though you enjoy the irony of the exercise, you don’t want to be a villain more than you already are accused of. So if I go too far, if I get lost in my own mind, I need someone to pull me back from the edge.”

There was a moment of silence and Hitoshi was in awe.

‘Me? But I don't have the best Quirk or share classes with you? How can you trust me?! All we do is come and sit and talk, we’re friends yeah but–’ is what he wants to say, but the thought is cut off, a flash of memory from after the internship period. *(“I never had many friends,” Midoriya rubbing his neck and looking tired at 3 in the morning in an all-night diner. “But I wanna be one of yours.”)*

Izuku rubs his neck the same way now, and beneath the thin veneer of smiles and nervousness is true uncertainty. He’s putting himself out there. Trying to open up.

“Sure, Izuku. I’ll keep you in check.”

That blinding smile he gets makes the anxiety he will no doubt suffer worth it.

Recover and Progress

Chapter Summary

Injuries are treated, and Night falls.

(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Day 1: 20 hours, 52 minutes (8:52 pm, local time)

“Microfractures all over the metacarpals in your right hand, contusions across your entire upper body, a slight concussion and a fractured jaw. Wow, Izu-kun, did you have to let him hit you so hard?” Mei joked, running a small scanner over his hands before she set it down. She turned to gather the antiseptic and liquid bandages from her pack.

“It wasn’t exactly consensual, Mei,” Izuku muttered, wincing as she cleaned the scrapes across his hands, eyes lidded as he ignored the pain that flared with every motion. “Besides, this is within what I expected, if a bit earlier then I would have liked. Thanks to you and Momo, the accelerant serum will help with the early healing and numb the pain. Your prototype gear will let me participate in the third act. I figure most of the second day will be spent resting in preparation while we acquire the last objectives. And while you mission-kill the snitch-bot.” He lifted his far less damaged left hand (he hadn’t used it to catch a high-grade explosive, at least) and moved to bring up his plans. A few taps of the console Mei had set up nearby and the Holowall glowed to life.

“I managed to snag the #1 insignia patch from Bakugou's uniform. We got the coffin out. We also have our VIP agent, the black data laptop and the skull from the vault. That's 1, 4, 5, 12, and 13. Kouji and your camera-bots confirmed eight more objectives,” Izuku mused, flicking through stills from the cameras. A jewelry store with a large gaudy diamond and a comically oversized price tag, number 7. Another high rise, this time a server room with a computer bank, a large 10 etched on the case. A warehouse on the edge of the city blocks, a large crate marked with 14 on the side stacked among the other boxes. A radio broadcast office, set up on the western half of the city, with another hostage bot, its eerily Present Mic-styled attire adorned with a bright 3.

“The four of these are spread out and divided enough that the night

teams can take them. Let's choose Breakdown Six. Con, Assault, go wake the teams, get them some food and give them time to gear up. We plan to start at 11:45. Mei, you get watch tonight. Hitoshi will run comms, and Mezou needs rest like me. Tonight needs to be in and out. No fuck-ups, no delays."

Hitoshi and Mezou nodded, already heading down to relay orders, Mezou shifting to loosen bruised muscles.

As they left, Mei looked at Izuku with a gleam in her eye. "Hey, Izu! Do you really think Neito will pull off the act you want?"

"Not at all. While he talks and plays haughty, he can't lie for shit. Too proud. It's why I had Hitoshi drug him to the gills. Saves him some pain from the broken arm as well." Izuku grinned, smirking at the remembered proud and expectant expression on Neito's face. He also knew that his poor savior was fine with sleeping a chunk of the night and tomorrow away.

"Wait, what drugs?"

Izuku smirked, pulling out an empty vial from his pocket, tossing it so she could see the label.

"The good kind."

Katsuki cracked his knuckles, feeling the low-burning ache through his arms and shoulders from his fight with Deku. His head wound had been shallow and sealed up with some liquid stitches with no problem, but he was technically concussed. With a ruling from Recovery Girl over the comms to check him, he was essentially removed from command for 12 hours. Also, he couldn't sleep due to the risk.

So instead, here he was. Sitting in bed with a warm blanket, looking over the feeds on his smart tablet. The villains had gone silent for the last few hours and with the exception of a very quiet, smiling Monoma, they were nowhere to be found. He tabbed to a feed of Tsuburaba and Asui interrogating his prisoner, or at least trying to. Monoma had refused sedation and was currently in a cell. Asui was playing good cop, trying to coax out anything she could and asking leading questions. Meanwhile, Tsuburaba tried to get Monoma angry or annoyed. Both had been told to keep a five-foot range, easily marked out by yellow tape, to keep him from stealing Quirks.

Bakugou was fucking annoyed. The whole sacrifice rubbed him the wrong way. He had never anticipated shit like this. He had expected Deku to fight tooth and nail not to lose anyone. Deku had looked surprised, damn near heartbroken, at Monoma jumping in. But something was… wrong.

Why didn't he try to save Monoma? He could have doubled back and saved him. The only other way was if Brain Drain had mind-washed his boss to head home. If that happened, Bakugou would have expected a dangerous level of damage to occur *somewhere.*

It didn't add up.

Hitoshi stepped down the last few steps into what at one time had been a fairly beautiful open-space office, but was now home to several crates of supplies and tables where gear was spread out and being assembled. The four teams he was sending out tonight were getting ready. Like the rest of the rooms the villains had taken in the building, thick blackout curtains covered the slew of windows.

Yosetsu and Sen were the team that seemed the most collected; their assets sliding into pockets and gear being tightened. Sen's armor was exposed, his long coat draped over the back of his seat as the fairly basic body armor, not much more than a vest and some arm guards, was strapped down. Then he added the equipment netting loaded with his supply of tools. His gas mask was sitting on the table, the filters fresh and ready. Beside him stood Yosetsu in a black tank top and cargo pants, with a courier-style pack of tools. His bandana was still there, holding his hair back, but a face mask similar to Mezou's stretched from cheekbone to collar, decorated with a massive blue smile. Yosetsu had taken his role as 'Graffiti' with glee and had already been planning out places for traps and ambushes through the building. The main stairwell, covered with bright red and blue 'X' marks and tripwires, was proof of that. The elevator itself was the only safe way through the upper levels of the Tower now.

The other teams were setting up as well.

Fumikage had his cloak spread out over the counter as he checked its wiring. His under-outfit was designed with leather and buckles in mind, taking inspiration from the old movie, *The Crow,* with Brandon Lee and Edward Scissorhands. A leather vest covered his torso, strapped tight with multiple buckles, many of which held small bits of gear. His black jeans were buckled with a bright red belt, matching his

collar, and a second black belt was slung low on one side, ladened with a row of grenades.

Beside him, Kuroiro had swapped his grey vest for a deep red one and was also grabbing quite a few tools and a pair of batons for combat. Beyond that, his hat had been replaced by a short black hood that stuck into the collar of his shirt. He had also added a gas mask with bright, green-glowing lenses.

Mina stood with Reiko by the window. She had forgone her classic motley array of colors in exchange for an outfit that looked like black scaley joints and plates of polished black armor, adding a smooth black visor that wrapped her eyes. Her pink hair was pulled back into a loose ponytail. Her armor had also been hooked up with tubes to and from tanks mounted on her hips, to store extra acids. In the end, she did indeed look like an alien queen.

Her partner Reiko, on the other hand, looked ghoulish. Her outfit, a loose school uniform in grey and black, was tattered and ripped. Her hair was covered by a black veil, giving her an appearance straight out of a horror movie. The pale, faceless white mask she favored only added to that menacing expression. Hitoshi knew from talking with Mei there were a few secrets to Reiko's outfit, extra armor and gear stashed in its layers.

The final duo was Juzou and Itsuka.

Juzou picked a full suit with tails when they had asked for his preference, and had a gold tie and hat band to accentuate his off-color skin tone. He also had a long, curved hook staff with him, for ease of use. The soft-spoken teen was engaged with Itsuka in conversation, who had taken a business casual approach. Button up shirt and vest, long skirt that parted up the sides to her thighs for ease of movement, and a belt of pouches filled with various tools and gadgets.

For several minutes Hitoshi watched, seeing them all finish setting up, zipping bags and stashing the last of the tools. With a twirl, Fumikage wrapped his cloak around his shoulders and the internal lighting turned on, bathing the depths of the cloak and hood with a deep red glow, both to keep Dark Shadow at bay and provide an intimidating effect. Particularly when he slipped on a cloth mask with the same tech over his head and it lit up with glowing red eyes and a smile over his avian skull.

With that, Hitoshi stepped forwards and tapped a console, the white

walls behind him being covered with projections.

“Alright, fall in ladies and gents. Izuku wanted us to strike at 11:45, I want us out and moving into position by 11:30. The faster we get this done, the faster we can set up for day two.”

Neito felt his eyes focus back on his… ‘interrogators,’ as they rattled off another line of questions. Tsuburaba was loud and aggressive, slamming the wall and blowing wind around. Asui was calm and focused.

Honestly? Even if Neito wanted to respond and fuck with them, he really couldn't. The pill that Con had slipped him was great at numbing out the pain of shattering both his arms, but it made the world… hazy. He sort of got what they were saying. “Where is your base? What are your plans? Blah blah blah." Honestly? Neito couldn't care. Con had said that it would wear off in about 16 hours and that Extortion would help with his arm problem.

‘Heh. The plan for Extortion is really, really, *really funny!’*

Neito burst into giggles and his interrogators gave up.

“Shouda, Asui–” Shiozaki Ibara started, looking over the gathered heroes.

“Call me Tsuyu.”

“Tsuyu, then. We’re setting up patrols. You two have the console.”

“Understood.”

“I, Todoroki, and Uraraka are team leaders. With me are Satou and Kamakiri. Uraraka has Sero and Tsuburaba. Todoroki has Rin and Shishida. Tokage, Hagakure, and Komori. You’re on base watch. Keep the place secure. In several hours the injured will start coming off bedrest and join you. One of you needs to keep watch on the prisoner.” Ibara continued, checking her tablet to confirm she had everyone in the right teams.

“For those of you who haven’t been informed,” Todoroki picked up, a screen behind him turning into a mugshot of Monoma and a fake rap sheet. “During the museum heist the villain team began a few hours ago, we managed to capture the injured Monoma Neito. He broke

both his arms channeling the Kingpin's super strength, buying time for their escape before surrendering to us. Shortly after, the system granted us access to his file. His villain alias is Larceny and he was supposedly partnered with Yaoyorozu Momo. He is currently self-sedated, potentially as a way to keep the pain from using Kingpin's Quirk at bay. As such, we cannot apply any sedatives until it clears out of his system. Interrogation proved unsuccessful. However, we believe it's possible that Kingpin will try to recover his ally sometime before day three. Keep an eye out."

With that, the heroes scattered to prep for their missions.

Across the street, an earphone jack slipped back into a manhole cover.

"Hacker, got some news for you. Heading back to my hideout now to transmit it to the Tower."

"Thanks, Miss Pirate Radio! Rember, get your stuff set up before noon and you can sleep the rest of the time."

"Good to hear. It's been a long day. PR out."

3 days before the exam

Izuku sat in Hatsume's workshop, testing out her mobile Holowall set up.

"So like this?" He made a gesture and the video feed his hand was hovering on was highlighted.

"Yep, that selects a feed, then you drag to your preferred location. The other gesture is for pausing data."

"Cool."

For a while, that was it. Occasional comments and questions, before the conversation died out. Mei focused on assembling the last barrel for the big gun before she noticed something. Namely, Izuku slouching against the back wall of the counter he was sitting on.

"Hey… Izuku?"

No response.

"Izzzzuuuu????"

A faint snore and Mei stepped around, looking at the dozing green-haired teen.

“Huh.”

Up close, Izuku didn’t look that good. He had the bags that she would associate more with Shinsou and his face was pale. Stress? He had been active and up late if the odd midnight updates to plans were any indicator.

She frowned and poked him, his head slowly tilting as he let out another light snore.

“Silly Kingpin,” she sighed and lifted his arm, pausing at how toned it seemed. Anyway, she had a beanbag in the corner she used when she needed a sleep break from tinkering on her babies. It would be more comfortable than sleeping standing up. She got his arm around her neck and reached to grab under his knees, planning to princess carry Izuku to the beanbag.

She got her grip, crouched and stood, and almost staggered because *holy hell* for such a small guy Izuku-kun was *heavy*.

Careful not to wake the sleeping mastermind, Mei navigated towards the massive bean bag she had in the corner. She set Izuku down, sighing in relief at letting the weight go. She was no stranger to heavy stuff, but Izuku still weighed more than she thought. She glanced down and noticed his shirt had ridden up, exposing the reason. The little badass was *pure muscle.* She grinned and took a picture of his abs, before shifting his shirt back down.

She laid a fleece blanket over him to keep him warm and headed back to the Holowall. She had a few adjustments to do.

Though if she ended up with a few more pictures of the sleeping green-haired boy… well, no one had to know.

The Witching Hour

Chapter Summary

Midnight approaches, as the games begin again.

(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Day 1: 23 hours, 44 minutes (11:44 pm, local time)

"Check in," Mei called, looking at the Holowall as she popped in her earset once more. Her eyes focused as the eight camera feeds from the villains' masks and hats came through.

"Nightmare and Blackout, ready." The two were crouched in a back alley, ready to move.

"Hold Up and Graffiti, ready to rock." They sat underground, standing at the base of a manhole cover.

"Drug-Runner and Lift, set and good to go!" There they were, Mina making acid to top off her tanks as they looked at the street from behind a dumpster.

"Sleight and Smuggler, eyes on the target." The two were sitting in an empty restaurant, having tunneled into the basement and already cut the alarms.

"Good. Go, on all fronts. Keep your wits about you; get in, get out, and get home."

"Base, this is Alpha, moving back down the third street going south. No signs," Uraraka called in over the comms, Tsuyu nodded to herself, making notes.

"Roger that. Beta, Delta, update?" Tsuyu murmured, marking Uraraka's current location on the map.

"Delta here. Moving north now, up near the west side at the moment, and we're heading back soon." That was Todoroki, marker goes there...

"Beta here, circling two blocks from the outside as usual, east side currently." And there was Shiozaki, marked there.

“Understood. Keep in touch.”

Juzou yawned as, with a soft click, his neck loosened and his jaw popped, clearing the last of sleep stiffness from his body. Beside him Itsuka, or Sleight, as she went by in the field, was stretching herself, hands locked behind her back. With a slow stretch back her spine clicked, a soft sigh of pleasure and relief leaving her lips as the duo turned their gazes to the heavy metal grate between them and their prize.

“It's impressive. The window is alarmed to hell and back, there are cameras everywhere and if any of the glass shatters, the alarms are triggered. Even then, there's no real way to reach the case. It’s reinforced and loaded with sensors. If we break it, the alarms go off,” Itsuka commented, looking over the information they had on their phones.

“Sadly, they never expected me, or us, choosing to simply smash and grab.” Juzou grinned, stepping to the side of the building closest to their target. With a tap, the wall shimmered and its texture seemed to soften.

“Would you be so kind, my Lady Sleight?”

“No problem, Sir Smuggler.” Cupping her hand into a clawing motion and growing it to be as wide as she was, Itsuka grasped the top and slowly dragged her hand down, leaving a new entry into the building the width of her massive hand.

“Wonderful. Let's grab and go.” He smiled, stepping over the now solid pile of brick sludge.

Juzou stepped quickly, ignoring the alarms that began ringing as he reached out. His hand pushed through the reinforced glass of the display with ease and pulled the gaudy, oversized diamond necklace out, sliding it into his coat to sit in a large interior pocket.

“Alarm’s going off and you got the Gravity patrol heading your way. Stay off the streets.”

“I guess we should take our leave before the heroes show up,” he muttered, amused, stepping out and looking up. The building next to the jewelry store was only three stories. Wonderful! “Shall we?”

Itsuka nodded and turned back to the wall. With her massive hand

held out, and a hop and a crouch to get ready, he jumped up as she threw him high. He hooked on the end of the cane, lashing out to catch the lip of the roof and guide his motion into a curve with a smooth landing. Spinning back around, he tightened his grip as he lowered his cane, and Itsuka leaped, a large finger catching the hook before she shrunk her hand, transitioning to a tight grip. A twist and a pull, and Sleight stood on the roof beside him.

“We're not too far from the restaurant. Let’s move,” she called out and the two rushed to the far side of the block.

With luck, the heroes would never see them.

“Sleight and Smuggler got their attention. Todoroki’s moving towards the east side. Move in.”

Fumikage and Shihai rushed through the shadowed streets towards the warehouse. They froze and kept an eye out at every corner as they stayed on the lookout for heroes. Blackout was a wraith, the deepest, blackest of shadows coating his skin and absorbing light, leaving a surreal blank spot in the night where he moved. Behind him, the faintly glowing cloak of Tokoyami looked like a demon from hell as it kept pace, red and black shifting as the tears in his cloak opened or shut with each movement.

They reached the warehouse without any sign of the heroes. With steady hands, Blackout picked at the lock, Nightmare letting the tension relax as he kept watch. Within a minute, the door was opened, and they were in. They rushed through the stacks, looking for the crate they wanted.

There it was.

It was large and strapped to a pallet. They had a plan for moving it, but that would be reliant on Graffiti bringing the truck around. Their job was to be ready for it.

“We’ll need the pallet jack or a forklift. I’ll track one down, double-check the straps and set up for the next stage,” Shihai said and Fumikage nodded, already running hands along the straps to check the connections.

They just had to hold out for pick up now.

“Clear. Shiozaki's team just checked in and she’s heading across town. Move.”

In the backstreet they had exited the sewers from, Yosetsu was already crouched with his hands in the guts of the pickup truck they had chosen to use. He mumbled as he reviewed the instructions Mei had given him, and as he twisted wires to get – there. A spark. He quickly welded those wires together and let the engine spark to life, leaving it idling in the alley.

“Exit route is prepped. Let’s get our guy.”

He and Sen made their way across the street and around a building to a fire escape, Sen twisting his legs before leaping the twelve feet up. It took only a few seconds for him to drop the ladder so Yosetsu could follow. The building they were at was only a few stories tall, but they needed to reach the top floor. That's where the recording studio would be.

The two villains reached the top floor and the security door that was their entrance.

“So... wanna knock?” Yosetsu asked, pulling a coil of wire from his bag.

“Sure.” Sen shrugged, before shifting his stance back. His hand began to rotate, his arm twisting and shortening as the mass was repurposed. Then, with a sound not unlike a snapping cable, slamming his fist into the door, denting the metal and blowing it off its hinges.

“Knock knock! Kidnapping! We want to give you to our boss! It's like a violent religion, just come quietly!” Yosetsu called out, striding in and kicking the door to the side, welding it into the wall to keep it out of the way.

“Isn’t ‘violent religion’ a redundant turn of phrase, since historically religion is fairly violent?” Sen murmured distractedly, taking a gun out from the inside of his jacket and pulling back the slide to check the chamber, before turning back to the alley.

“Shhh, I’m bird hunting,” Yosetsu called back, storming into the building and down a short hall, kicking through a frosted glass door.

A fire alarm finally began going off. There, clumsily standing behind a desk across the open floor studio, was the target. A modified civil-bot with a conical yellow hat and a leather vest. It looked like a shitty

Present Mic cosplayer.

Yosetsu snapped the wire taut between his fists, the blue painted-on smile and dark eyes showing as he stomped across the room. “There you are! Now hold still so this doesn’t hurt...”

“Shit, there’s a second alarm! Uraraka, keep on the first alarm, Todoroki, get ready to back Uraraka up from the north if there’s a fight. Shiozaki, the alarm is coming from three blocks east and one north of where you are now. Hurry! Sending you the marker now!”

Reiko held out her hand, watching it turn pale and lifeless, stuck rigidly in place, as a new spectral arm emerged from the wall and opened the door from the inside. She and her partner walked through the side door of the high rise without setting off the alarm. Behind her, Mina grinned and looked around.

“That was easy. Now we just need to get to the fourth floor and plug in the uplink!”

“Yep. Let’s head up. You’ll need to melt a few walls. I can only open some of the doors like that.”

“As we planned?” Mina asked, already tapping her visor and seeing the overlaid blueprints through the walls. Wiring and plumbing showed up in bright red, supports in yellow.

“As we planned,” Reiko echoed back, striding through the building’s back hallways.

The two horror movie villains grinned as they headed upstairs.

Uraraka leaped from building to building, short pulses of weightlessness letting her move from one vantage point to another with long, carefully timed jumps. Sero moved across the street, and between them Tsuburaba ran down it, his breathing slow and easy as the three headed for what HQ had told them was a jewelry store. She was heading up to a taller point when she saw them, nothing much, but a flicker of change, a breaking of light from one window to another. Two figures leaping across the rooftops a half block away.

“Sero, Tsuburaba, I have visual contact. Here's the plan.”

6 days before the exam

Uraraka glanced back across the room, seeing Deku tense slightly but keeping his eyes down as she joined the hero team. Beside her, Todoroki leaned back against the wall, eyes also locked on Izuku. Todoroki looked at Izuku with a thoughtful expression as Iida joined them, also somewhat morose at what felt like a betrayal. She looked over and shared a commiserating look with her rule-abiding friend, only to be interrupted from her thoughts.

“Uraraka,” came the soft voice.

That was not Iida. She turned to the ice and fire user. “Wh–”

“Don’t pity him.”

“What do you mean?” she hissed back, a flicker of anger igniting under her skin before she noticed how tense Todoroki actually was.

“Don’t. Pity. Midoriya. It's not going to end well if you do,” Todoroki emphasized softly, but his gaze was locked on her. “I've seen that stance twice. Felt this mood before.”

“W-When?”

“When he stood back up and yelled at me during the festival, when he broke his already broken fingers. *When he convinced me to use my fire.”*

That was enough to shock her. She had seen Deku during that, they all had. The two fighters had been away from any microphones and most of the cameras aimed at them had been unable to really get a good shot of Izuku’s face during that fight in the arena. Todoroki had tossed ice everywhere and Izuku’s strikes had claimed their fair share of cameras. But she had seen Izuku pause and then *push* harder than before.

“What was the second time?”

Iida spoke up this time, a sharp hissed word that surprised her.

“Hosu. The second time was in Hosu. That's when I saw it.”

Uraraka looked back at her friend. Everyone in the class knew something went down in Hosu. Midoriya’s mysterious message, the fact they were admitted to the hospital, Iida's new scars and the video of Stain. She knew those things meant *something,* but she didn’t know

exactly what. She swallowed, finding her throat suddenly dry, and looked back at the green-haired kid who she had saved on the first day. This time she paid more attention.

'Like Gunhead-sensei said. Watch the body. Watch the eyes. They'll give themselves away.'

Izuku… was still. Not like when he was scared. No. It looked like when he was muttering. Like when he was standing and focused. But this time it wasn't about a hero or a new Quirk. No. He focused on the room. On *Bakugou.*

'I wonder… what is going to happen, Izuku?'

As the class came to a close, Aizawa dismissed them, only calling for Izuku to stay for a moment to discuss a test.

'What are you going to do?'

Duels in the Dark

Chapter Summary

Nighttime mayhem runs through the streets, the Heroes have been pushed back, but now they return the favor.

Now they chase.

(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Day 1: 23 hours, 54 minutes (11:54 pm, local time)

Juzou would have been taken out in the first moment of the fight if he hadn't turned to check his six o'clock. As it is, he only brought his hook staff around in time to clumsily fend off a high-speed kick from a student in orange and black armor.

He stumbled back and into Itsuka's side, causing her to spin around, hands already expanding.

By then the attacker had kicked off, flying up and back across the roof, pulled back in a long arc to where two strands of tape were stuck to the rooftop.

"Tower, got three on us from above. We need an exit stat. Sero, Uraraka, and Tsuburaba," Itsuka muttered. It was true, staff raised and held to guard, Juzou could see what was going on more clearly now. Sero was floating just above the roof, the tape from his elbows anchoring him. Beside him, Tsuburaba mantled over the ledge, while Uraraka landed from a long jump, tapping her hands together as she and Sero dropped to the floor.

"Hello, villains! We are here to capture you. Come along quietly or get wrecked!" Tsuburaba called, tensed for a fight.

"Hold on a minute, I gotta check something."

"Better make it fast, Hacker."

Sen and Yosetsu rushed, the civil-bot held by its legs and torso between them as they moved across the street.

Sen glanced around and cursed. There, probably two blocks away and

closing in fast, a snaking line of vines was coming their way. It was ridden by three figures as it lashed out and dragged itself forwards rapidly.

“Graffiti, get going. I’ll slow them down.”

Sen dropped the legs towards Yosetsu, who rushed into the side street and headed for the still idling truck.

At the same time, Sen pulled his handgun back out and took careful shots at the heroes. Two blocks… almost a fourth of a kilometer in distance.

The snap-hiss sound of the gun went fast as he tried to pepper the approaching heroes. Sadly, that fell apart when the vines simply shifted and curled back, granting Shiozaki and her allies built-in cover before they surged forwards once more.

“Oh, that’s not fucking fair.” Sen put the gun away as he ran down the side street, the roar of the pick up signaling that it was time to go. He reached to his jacket lapel and pulled a cylinder from where it hung, yanking the pin and dropping it as he vaulted the back of the truck. He came to a stop less than a meter from the welded-to-the-wall Mic-bot.

“GO GO GO!” He hammered on the cab’s back wall with a boot, looking at the first tendrils of vines that came creeping along the street. Then, his grenade started spewing thick and heavy smoke into the night air, quickly blacking out the alley behind him.

Awase hit the gas, shifted gears, and with the squeal of tires on concrete, they were off.

They exited with a cloud of smoke-spewing after them, along with vines that crept along buildings and chased them.

“Oh goddamnit.” He pulled the gun again and started taking potshots, forcing Shiozaki to multitask. “I know she’s been putting time into growing her vines bigger and faster, but this is goddamn insane.”

He managed to make them stagger back, hiding behind vines a few times, but the truck was swerving slightly. “Graf! Keep her steady, Hack we need a route that won’t get us caught please!”

“HOLD TIGHT!” came the call and Sen grimaced, holding tight as the truck all but drifted and they turned south, spinning their tires and

squealing as they made a wide right turn away from the borders of the district, taking them down another street.

“Working on it!”

“WORK FASTER, BITCH!” Yeah, okay, Yosetsu was pissed. Fuck.

Sen grabbed another grenade, an incendiary this time, and yanked the pin, counting down from three.

“Tossing flame!”

The bomb skidded off the street where, with a dull explosive sound, it spread a splash of flames across the street, the fuel sticking to the concrete and burning. The plants reared back, Shiozaki obviously was taken off guard, before the vines shifted to climb the buildings as the three riders were circled up and around the flames.

“Floor it past this street and take the next right turn, then go straight through the next three blocks. After that, the road turns back north as you pass the city center and you can hopefully juke the heroes a bit!”

“Fine. SHI– SEN, BRACE.”

“Oh, shIT–”

The truck shuddered as it sideswiped a parked sedan, the turn down the side street going wide. Sen was gripping the truck bed walls with white fingers at the impact before the car skidded back off and continued down the street.

“Warning would be nice!”

“FUCK YOU SEN. SORTA BUSY.”

“This is Con, I’m back and retaking comms so Hacker can do her job. Drugs, Lift, keep it slow and careful. Sleight, Smuggler, get inside the building. The roof beneath you is clear for passage. Night, Black, open the southeast side warehouse loading door, you want bay 4. Get the pallet ready to go as fast as possible at the opening. You’ll have less than a minute to drop and get in. Graf and Hold, keep on the course. The heroes are falling behind, which is good, but I’ve got some worrying movement from the Ice Man to the north.”

Mina and Reiko shared a glance, hearing the troubles their allies were facing.

“Let’s hurry. They might need back up,” Mina held out her hand and flexed as she spoke, the gloves that collected the acid releasing sharp hooked claws. With a flex of her wrist and hand, she swapped the pump on her suit from draining to releasing her acid.

With the heavy-duty non-corrosive points exposed and dripping with alkalines, she went to work. She scored lines filled with the highly potent acid that slowly melted and corroded through the concrete and rebar wall between them and the server room. As it crumbled she dug the claws in, pulling the decayed chunks away to let the acid eat deeper, faster. She scored through each layer quickly, Reiko standing back to avoid the slowly-spreading line of acid across the floor. The ghost girl poured a neutralizing compound across them with the help of a phantom limb.

From testing on another building, they knew this would take almost ten minutes. The schematics showed there weren’t sensors or alarms in the server room, only the rooms and offices leading into it.

Uraraka was pulled back by Sero’s tape once more, the coil around her hand helping as she pulled free of the sudden quicksand that the floor became.

Across from them stood Itsuka and Juzou, breathing heavily as they looked ready to fight. The combat had been hectic, the heroes avoiding the rooftop itself as best they could, since the surface shifted back and forth from stone and concrete to a consistency resembling tar. The villains in return were much more elusive, avoiding Uraraka’s hands or Sero’s tape. Tsuburaba had taken a few potshots but was far more concerned with giving his team a place to step or thing to grab so they could stay free to move.

“Sleight, I believe it’s time to for us to step down,” Juzou called, slamming his foot down and setting his staff at the ready. A moment later and he had shifted a much larger radius around him to a tar-like consistency, the heroes leaping back. Itsuka stepped close as she pulled a simple mouth and nose mask from her jacket, pressing it on to seal with a hiss.

Uraraka had but a second to realize what their plan was before she was lunging in low gravity, trying to clear the gap in a last-ditch attack. She was stopped though, Juzou swinging up the bottom of the hooked cane to slam into her, throwing her back and up for a minute as the two villains dropped through the roof, sinking through a

sudden hole of liquid.

“Shit. In we go,” Tsuburaba muttered before blowing a platform of air for Uraraka to land on as the surface of the roof solidified once more.

“This is going to be a nightmare,” Sero muttered, flexing as he readied himself.

Yosetsu gritted his teeth, hand gripping the gearshift tight and body leaning into the foot on the gas pedal. He popped the clutch and swapped to a higher gear, palming the wheel as he steadied his course again, avoiding one more reaching vine that tried to engage and slow the sideswipe the truck made from a side-alley. Honestly, he knew Shiozaki had been training but normally to get her Quirk going like this she needed an open field or somewhere to grow and strengthen– “FUCK, Con, is there a city park around here?”

“There’s a corner park a block north and two closer to the center of the district,” Con confirms his suspicions and Yosetsu guns it, counting down the distance. Another creeping vine crawling from an alley on the north side of the street gets flattened, but not before taking off his right-side mirror.

“It’s there. Her vines are coming from there.”

“Well shit. You need to go right past it unless you want to be close enough to the Hero Agency for it to send back up,” Con responded, voice sharp.

“Good.” Reaching back Yosetsu reached down and grabbed his gun from his belt before he slammed the butt of the weapon through the rear window of the cab, shattered tempered glass raining down across the seat next to him. “SEN, I GOT A PLAN.”

“WHAT DO YOU NEED?”

“YOUR FIREBOMBS.”

3 days before the exam

Mei finished her final check on the equipment. Before her, twelve metal briefcases were opened and lined up, their contents on display.

“Red goo, flame, concussive, flash, smoke, tear gas...” She checked-off her list. Izuku had requested these and they were easy enough, most of the designs had even been premade. A bit of editing to remove as

much spare material as they could feasibly get away with was done, particularly once she had Momo and Neito produce the casings. Speaking of the ‘Miracle Matter Makers,’ the two had headed to lunch, planning to gorge themselves to make up for lost calories and fat reserves.

Mei took her time closing up and locking the cases. After Izuku’s earlier visit and subsequent nap, she had finished most of the materials for the exercise.

She packed the briefcases in a crate and looked over the back of the trucks in her lab. Two were filled with stacks of organized cases and crates, all small enough to fit in the eventual bases and travel through the sewers. She had RG guns and ammo, demolition charges, the Holowall, comms and computers, and personalized suits of gear, all personally designed to make the villains stylish and dangerous. And much, much more.

The one with the mount for her baby was particularly exciting, and there were a few crates prepped there as well.

But she had two more projects that Izuku hadn't seen yet.

Mei stashed the grenade crates in the trucks and then wandered to the back of her lab, pulling the half-completed projects from where they sat, hidden in plain sight.

She had her personal equipment almost ready, the partial exoskeleton finished and the armor close to completion. But for Izuku...

Well, his gear was still only going to be a prototype and that's all she could give him. But she was sure he would make it work, despite the time limit it would have.

She heard the door to the lab open, Neito's softly accented voice chatting about basic weapon designs with a cheerful Momo.

Mei blocked them out for a moment. She had three days, and aside from finishing with her personal projects, there was one more thing she wanted to do. The trucks were nice, but Izuku had a point: style and impact were important.

She pulled up the requisitions form and the catalog of cars already placed in the city (most were old beaters, donated for use in the exam) and tabbed through it, selecting a town car for getting in early. But she needed the right car, something Izuku would like. Tomorrow, any

of the villains who couldn’t already drive were learning the basics of driving anyway, Yosetsu planning to walk them through it.

Since Mei could drive (just not legally) she decided that she would use the spare time to get started.

“What I need… is something *fast.”* She paused, looking at the pictures on her screen, before grinning. It wasn't what she expected and Izuku would need to take an extra class to learn it.

“Perfect.”

Burning Away the Chaff

Chapter Summary

(Updated with final edits, 5/2/19)

Day 2: 0 hours, 2 minutes (12:02 am, local time)

“I hate this plan!” Sen muttered, slowly twisting his legs as he focused on the trailing Shiozaki. He would only really get one shot at this.

“So do I, but let's do it. Be safe!” Yosetsu returned, eyeing the next block and where he had to go.

Ibara pushed harder, growing her vines faster and larger. After her humiliating defeat in the Sports Festival, she was going to prove herself. Before her team’s patrol, she had spent the better part of an hour at one of the only plots of plant life in the city, growing the infrastructure to make her vines longer and stronger.

Then these two showed up. *Kaibara and Awase,* better known as the class jokers. Awase was rude and uncouth, constantly vulgar as he taunted and insulted his opponents. While far calmer, Kaibara was disrespectful and apathetic towards those around him, not to mention openly heretical, as evidenced by several very loud, very pointed debates he had started with her. Both had mocked her Christian leanings in their own ways, and she had no plans to let them escape her grasp during this exercise.

She focused, the closing distance back to the park making her vines grow stronger as she pushed herself faster and farther. Sen brought up his gun again and with a newly practiced motion, a swift weaving of vines flowed before her and her companions.

But the thud and splatter of the bullets never came.

Instead, a hissing sound reached her. She glanced up, the vines loosening to let her see, only for Kaibara to go crashing through, kicking her back with a surprised gasp as his boots made contact through the vines. His gas mask shone with blue baleful eyes, gazing through the dark of the night. In each hand was a pair of pulled grenades, smoke pouring out and wreathing him like a demon of hell and brimstone. One was deep black and thick, the other a noxious

green-blue glowing in the street lights, the scent of it making her tear up and choke.

'Tear gas of some sort! No!'

She shoved him back, trying to get him away but he simply dropped the grenades, making her gasp and stagger as the vines pulled her and her allies back. In the corner of her eye, she could see Kamakiri swipe his hand, a blade growing from his arm to swipe the grenade's smoke clear.

From above the path of the blade Kaibara leaped in once more, body twisted and contorted as he used his strange Quirk. He lept off one vine to another and then shoulder-checked Satou, the sugar eater grunting and stumbling back as he reached for a dose of sugar. With a twisting motion, Kaibara was behind him and pulling his gun, placing it against the underside of Satou's head, keeping his jaw closed and pointing a second gun at Kamakiri and Ibara. catching themselves, both heroes froze, glancing at each other and tensing.

"Now, let's hold up and relax a minute or you may just lose another teammate."

Mina pointed a fist at the remains of the wall where they sizzled on the floor. With a hiss, the back of her gauntlet released a faint spray that seemed to congeal and solidify the mess. With that done, Reiko stepped past carefully and plugged the wireless connector Mei had given her into the server that sat blinking in the room.

"Connection in. Heading out now."

"Understood. Head to provide potential support to Sleight and Smuggler."

"Moving to the west district now."

The two girls trooped back down the stairwell. Reiko's arms went pale, letting her quickly pass from floor to floor by oversized glowing blue translucent arms, while Ashido slid down the stairwell on a stream of acid.

Sero Hanta crouched under the spinning staff of Honenuki Juzou, leaping off another desk in the office he and the skeletal villain were stuck in. The sounds of thuds and Uraraka and Tsuburaba's cursing echoed as they fought with Kendou on the other side of the room.

Uraraka had tried using her Quirk, but Zero Gravity and Giant Fists had been a bad experience, so she had swapped to relying on Gunhead's training. Tsuburaba had tried to get a few shots in, popping shields or blowing spears of air, but Kendou was more than strong enough to shatter his air constructs.

The floor around Honenuki shifted and melted once more, the desk Hanta was standing on shifting as the villain lunged, staff spinning around for another strike. Hanta had managed to stick him with tape a few times, but Honenuki simply softened and then ripped the bands apart. He had resorted to this game of keep away and tossing bits of furniture at Honenuki in the hopes to knock him off-guard.

Hanta's tape yanked him towards the ceiling and at Honenuki as the staff passed beneath him before the swinging hook came around and caught his knees. Yelping as he was twisted and all but thrown across the room, Hanta came rolling up on his feet, only for Honenuki to kick a broken chair (one of the earlier weapons Sero had tossed at him) at the Tape Hero's face. Hanta brought his arms up to block the impact, only for Honenuki to kick him back and to the ground. Hanta tried to push himself up when the ground beneath him seemed to shift and give and his hands went through the now-soft floor.

"Team Gamma is awake and soon to head inbound, Team Delta is moving southeast to support Beta. Keep them there and off-guard."

Rolling his eyes, Hanta grunted and pulled his hands out of the soft floor before it could harden, leaping up and at Honenuki once more, only for a weightless Uraraka to be sent crashing into him from behind.

Honenuki lept back, skipping as he ran a hand along the ceiling, making the roof sag in and droop like taffy, long lines of material hardening between the two of them and him.

"Easier said than done, HQ," Tsuburaba called back over the comms, just before Kendou closed in and smashed him back and out of the office, into the halls.

"Todoroki and his Brute Squad are heading south-east. Hold Up and Graffiti, you have maybe a few minutes to get clear. Nightmare, be ready to support once the truck gets to you."

Yosetsu grinned and hit the brakes, the truck skidding to a stop. With Sen distracting the team, Shiozaki had let up on her control, which

meant that the park was open. The patch of green had overgrown, massive twisting vines stretching out of the ground and across the street and buildings around it. Larger vines grew as tall as adult trees, trailing off in Shiozaki's direction.

Slamming the door open, Yosetsu hefted the four fused-together flame grenades he got from Sen. With a solid pull, he ripped the cord fused through the pins.

"Three…"

He cocked his hand back, holding the bundle from the end of the cord, the other end fused with the bundle itself. The four pins jingled from where they stayed on the line.

"Two…"

With a final spin for speed, he let it fly above the park, the entire unstable hunk of explosives wobbling and twisting as it went high.

"Burn, bitch!"

Then there was fire. Like a spinning top, waves of the flaming chemical compound splashed out of the fused grenades, scattering across the center of the park as the burning bundle hit the ground. Grinning to himself, Yosetsu watched as the vines, barely sustainable by Shiozaki with the resources of the park, went up like dry kindling. Running to the truck, Yosetsu popped back in the driver's seat.

"Sen, coming back now. Bitch's park is burning, so I give her 30 seconds before exhaustion or panic kicks in."

"So, Shiozaki–"

"–I'm quite amazed you got your vines so large. You used a park or something, yeah?"

She growled, vines thrashing around her as she and Kamakiri stepped in different directions, trying to flank Kaibara. Satou was growling lowly, still stuck with the gun pressed on his chin. "I did. By nature's grace, me and my vines have grown strong."

Sen listened, the faint roar of the engine revving as it came back. He spoke up to cover the sound, laughing. "Really! I wonder, how does fire affect your Garden of Eden?" He glanced between and behind the

two of them pointedly and Shiozaki gasped, turning. Across several blocks, the faint glow of the wildfire that Awase had started was already visible in the night.

The truck came back drifting in a wide curve out of a side street so the back of the truck faced the standoff.

Sen took advantage of everyone looking away. He pulled the triggers.

Satou roared in pain, his neck and lower jaw turning red. Shiozaki shrieked, four red patches appearing with wet thumps across her back. However, Kamakiri, when Sen tried for the triple, simply lashed out, the red splashes blasted away with crisscrossing slashes of blades.

Sen turned and ran, spinning with his Quirk to dodge a razor sharp blade from a suddenly very spiky, and very angry-looking Kamakiri, who charged after him. He was getting closer and Sen was stuck dodging the rapid-fire slashes and piercing lunges, darting past them even as they gave him almost no free room to maneuver.

He got clipped, the tip of a blade carving across the face of his body armor and leaving Sen spinning off balance as Kamakiri reached for him, when a rapid hiss-click sound echoed. The hero was now coated with several splotches of red across his side and face.

The incredulous-looking hero jerked his head to the side, Sen following suit. There was Yosetsu leaning out of his broken passenger window, an SMG variant of the RG gun still pointed at the hero.

“Get in fucker, we’re going shopping.”

With a laugh at the mangled quote, Sen waved at the now ‘killed’ hero team, before leaping to the truck and swinging into the bed once more.

“See ya, bitches! Good time playing with you!”

With a sigh, the three dead heroes sat and waited. In their ears, they could hear Ectoplasm saying he would have a clone there in a minute to escort them back to the Observer Station, and that there were rooms they could sit and wait in, if they wished. They couldn’t even call up the base with an update since they were all considered ‘dead’ and automatically locked out of the hero comms.

"Shit, I just lost Beta. Delta, hurry to intercept."

Todoroki breathed deep, his team sliding alongside him on an iced-over path over the roofs as he closed in on his target.

He had known from the first day that this would not be an easy fight. But even he had not been ready to face Midoriya as the Kingpin.

Regardless, to succeed they needed to begin taking out Midoriya's allies. If they were so dangerous that he needed to do it himself, then he would.

2 days before the exam

Izuku watched the speeding truck as it raced around the lot. Finding out that UA had a closed racing track was a surprise, but Mei explained it was part of the third-year curriculum for dealing with vehicles and, for the Support Class, a place to test vehicle designs.

Izuku could name a dozen famous heroes with vehicles. Gearhead, Rotoscope, Drift King, and more. Having a driving class makes sense.

As it was, four of the villains had proven to be skilled drivers in some way or another. Yosetsu was the best, with experience with trucks and vans from his family job. Behind him in the ranks were Mei, who had tested a few vehicles, Momo, who learned a few months ago, and interestingly enough, Izuku himself.

Honestly, it wasn't like it was hard, just spacial awareness, reflexes, and memorization. It was actually quite relaxing. After spending the past few days drilling combo attacks and basic strategies, this was a good chance to rest and unwind.

Though Mei did mention teaching him a different control layout.

He bet it had to do with the 'new project' she was working on yesterday.

All he knew was that it was coming along fast, using a lot of the premade parts she had access to, and Momo and Neito were helping her.

Midnight Bash, Buildings Crash

Chapter Summary

> The night phase comes to a close, leaving some empty-handed, and other with wounds to care for.

Day 2: 0 hours, 21 minutes (12:21 am, local time)

The truck roared down the street and only slowed at the last moment, skidding as it went around a far corner and down a side-street. Finally, after a running battle, it pulled into a short driveway to a tall warehouse at the corner of the fake city. The truck pulled into the lot and took a sharp turn, fishtailing as it turned around and pulled up aside an open loading dock and braking.

“You are late,” came the terse voice of Tokoyami Fumikage, stepping into sight. With the red glow etching his outfit, he appeared ethereal, menacing and demonic all the same time. Behind him, Kuroiro Shihai moved forwards in a forklift, lowering a pallet with a thick wooden crate onto the back of the truck. Through the shattered rear window, Yosetsu leaned out and touched both the pallet and the truck bed, the faint hiss of them fusing reaching their ears as the two other villains stepped into the truck.

“Sorry, vine problem,” Sen muttered, finally taking a moment to reload and check his guns.

“So we heard,” Shihai's voice, dry and rough, confirmed. “Let's go, we have unwanted friends coming our way.”

Yosetsu needed no further prompting. With sharp motions, he popped the clutch, slammed the gas, and let the brakes go. With a squeal, the truck shot off, the three passengers in the back holding the cabin and sides as the truck sped up.

“Fuck, incoming on the tru–”

That's when the massive glacier formed and blocked off the road they were heading for.

Twenty minutes and five floors of melting, twisted combat in a seven-story building later, and the fight was still not over. Each floor they had passed through got destroyed thoroughly before the villains

escaped, taking the stairs or simply falling through a floor like liquid as they evaded capture.

Thank God for Gunhead-sensei's insane training regiment.

The heroes were running ragged and the villains weren't doing much better. The three heroes stood staring past a twisted and distorted corridor, into two massive handfuls of brick pulled from the walls of the hallway and smashed into a half-formed wall between the heroes and the villains. At some point Honenuki Juzou had lost his staff and hat, now looking worn down, sporting quite the bruise across his temple from a lucky hit by Tsuburaba. Kendou Itsuka looked far worse, her arms black and red, dark purple bruises already forming up to her shoulders and her hands all colored in purple.

“Alpha, Gamma is coming in now.”

Uraraka couldn't help but grin as she heard the good news of her backup coming in. Her opponents tensed as they readied to fight once more.

“Wai– WATCH OUT FOR THE ACID!”

Ojiro frowned as he looked at the two girls who had intercepted his team. With a quick motion, he held his two allies, both hard-headed as could be, back from running into a trap; a rooftop layered with pools of acid, the corrosion weak enough to not kill, but more than strong enough to weaken the roof to the consistency of something like styrofoam. Across the stretch of the decayed and corroded roof, were the two most disturbing villains he had seen yet, Alien Queen and Poltergeist. (Ojiro didn’t know their true villain aliases, and honestly never wanted to find out).

“I hate horror movies,” Ojiro muttered, and then he was busy dodging acid and spectral limbs.

“Intercept successful, Horrors on the roof of the exit with the company. Get ready.”

Juzou felt elation. They could finally stop delaying for the others. The original plan had been to simply escape, but with the eyes on them, Con and Hacker had suggested they fight, drawing it out as long as possible. Now, with their reinforcements here and ready to exit, he tapped into the reserve he had been holding onto, pulling as much

power and range from his Quirk as he could.

With that in mind, he smiled and touched the ground. A contact lens in his left eye whirred to life, turning his gaze red as it highlighted the densest materials around him, including the building support beams.

“Foundational–,” he called out, making the heroes tense and look worried. He knew his bright red eye would freak them out. The lense cost him some depth perception but it made the entire eye, from sclera to pupils, turn a uniform red. Beyond that, calling out attacks was childish, but it was something that grabbed attention. What the heroes had failed to notice was that they had led the fight so that they were against the back half of the building. The half that was but a short alley from the neighboring building. One which had a convenient entrance to the sewers in its basement.

Quite convenient, but crossing the alley would be suicide with enemies like this team of heroes. Instead, let’s make the alley *disappear*.

As his power encroached into the building and took root, he smiled. It strained slightly as he selected and reached up and around him, as well as below.

“–Collapse.”

Just like that, yet another building became a casualty.

Around the hall, in front of his so-helpful defense, the walls and ceiling sagged and began to stretch, the floor tilting and separating as it snapped and the weight took hold. The rest of the building shuddered as well, key supports twisting and making the heroes yelp, the building seemingly sinking in on itself.

As the lower floors of the back third of the building sagged and sunk back into the alley, Itsuka reached out, her hands growing as she punched out through the back wall and into the wall of the building behind them.

Shouto stood atop the thirty-foot-tall glacier, ice in his right side steaming away as a small flame flickered across him.

“Surrender, or fall,” he called, voice sharp as the four people in the truck looked at him.

He watched them glance at another and then back at Shouto.

He doubted they would surrender, but protocol needed to be maintained.

He was right.

A squeal of tires on asphalt and the truck began to reverse away at high speed, swerving slightly as it backed up.

Which is why he had his team ready themselves at the far end of the street.

With a surge of cold through his side, he readied another glacial blast. He would be the anvil for his team.

Then he flinched, prematurely drawing a wall of ice before him as it spattered with several red spots.

Of course. Those paint guns.

With a wave of his hand, he sent a wide curved slope of ice down towards the truck, intending to freeze it in place. The truck seemed to slow its reverse, the sound of wheels spinning and squealing against the street echoing as it came to a stop and then *charged at the glacier.*

A wave of black energy lashed out and shattered the still-forming wave of ice.

The energy and shadow took form, a massive bird-like shape, consisting of static and shadow. It crashed into his glacier, sending him falling back as the mountain of ice shattered.

Shit, Tokoyami.

And it's just past midnight.

Twisting around, fire and ice at his fingertips, Todoroki prepared for a fight like none he had never faced.

Mina and Reiko danced back across the rooftop from the heroic bulldozers that were trying to move across the roof, led by Ojiro and his impeccable sense of balance. Mina sprayed acid on safe paths and Reiko spawned arms to try and pull them off balance while keeping them off-guard. The villains knew where it was safe to stand, Mina's visor highlighting stable supports even as the roof began collapsing.

Most of the damage was on the west side of the building, the location where the neighboring building had all but fallen apart, already caving in, all thanks to Juzou.

“Sleight and Smuggler are in the building, get to the ground floor.”

Hitoshi’s voice was welcomed as it confirmed that the plans had worked. With the four of them, they could solidly block off the tunnels long enough to vanish into the system and cover their tracks.

“See ya, boys!”

Mina called, already identifying a weakened point that would lead to the ground floor.

Leaping, she hit it feet first, hands and arms braced out to the side to clear the entrance as Reiko moved with quick steps and a twist, falling after her partner with a pair of raised middle fingers.

Mina led the two through the already acid-covered floors, past places where the ceiling was sagging to the point of collapse and down a stairwell to the ground floor.

They busted out on the first floor to see a limping Smuggler and a dust-covered Sleight.

“Let's go. Drug-Runner, acid in the room.”

“Done and done.” Turning back as the three fled through another door, she pumped her most vicious and potent acids across the ground floor. Normally she wouldn't be able to output this much, but she had spent most of the last three days draining her strongest acids into Mei’s storage, and then letting the mad engineer distill them. Acid sprayed out from pressurized vents across her hand and arms, in a mist. The room, a bakery of some sort, was left hissing behind them, the metal appliances already sinking and decaying as a warning.

They filed down the narrow concrete-walled stairs to the basement, where a sewer grate sat. Leaving Smuggler to rest, Drug-Runner took the point here, grasping each edge of the grate and leaving it hissing as Itsuka stepped up and threw a 3-foot tall right hook, blowing the now weak gate off its hinges. With that, the two teams vanished, leaving behind a chunk of pulled apart stone forming a wall of interlocking stone arms.

After all, Reiko was known as 'Lift' for a reason, even if she hadn't

shown it yet.

Falling, Shouto twisted, bringing fire to life as the shadow familiar crashed into him once more, making the dark bird destabilize from its attack.

Todoroki landed and was already pushing off down the road south. His ice formed a ramp beneath his feet, letting him skate through the street as he tried to catch up, but the gap was growing only larger as the truck picked up speed. He saw the guns come up once more. He skidded and swerved, pulling pillars of ice up ahead of him to block the shots, only for the now-recovered familiar to crash through them once more. For three blocks, he and the villains had been in this chase of stop and go, him making the truck skid by icing the road, only to have to defend himself as they escaped his traps.

He was losing and he knew why. His fire. Right now, despite his resolve to use both sides of his Quirk, he was unpracticed with his fire and with swapping or combining the two. Aside from overwhelming force like at the sports festival, he was open and clumsy when trying to use both abilities and they weren't giving him time to prepare a stronger attack. Either Dark Shadow or the guns kept him from building up power, the ice was wasted building cover from the guns, and the familiar was only slightly weakened by the glow of his fir–

His internal dilemma was cut off as two cylinders were tossed into the field of shattered ice that he was passing through.

His eyes widened and he reflexively covered himself in a half-dome of ice.

A smart move, as the two concussive explosions, shattered the crystalline structures and cracked his defense. He burst free in anger and focus, rushing forward– just in time for him to meet a flashbang less than a meter in front of him.

Three minutes later, when Shouto could finally see and stand once more, with Shishida and Rin at his side, the truck and its cargo were gone.

3 days before the exam

Sparring, sparring and *surprise!,* more sparring.

For three days now, the hour of class time scheduled by the teachers for the teams to get ready for the exercise, which replaced Foundational Heroics, was filled with sparring. One on one, two on two, teams of three or four. All backed by the constant litany of swears and insults from their *illustrious* leader, Bakugou Katsuki.

'God. The teachers made the wrong choice,' was their constant thought.

Looking around, they can see others with the same thought on their faces. Their leader was going to burn them out before they even reached the exercise. He stayed for this one hour and then headed home after school. That was it. Aside from his rants that they were all morons and extras and that he would rip apart the Kingpin, (Deku? I thought it was Izuku...) himself.

No teamwork.

No sense of companionship or trust.

It was *maddening.*

It was middle school politics all over again.

“So, you want to defect, right?” mused Izuku, sitting at a desk in some conference room he had acquired the use of. In the corner of the room, two other guys hung out; the first with spiky purple hair, the other was Monoma.

“Yes. Our leader’s a goddamn madman and it's going to tear us apart. I want to be on the winning team.” They scowled, sipping at their full glass of water.

A grin, soft and relaxed. “Yeah… that's Kacchan, I guess. But you’re sure about wanting to be a villain?” Now the grin was sharper, more focused on them. “I can’t guarantee it will work, you know. If Kacchan finds out, you’ll be taken out and I can't have you defect until the exam.” He leaned forwards, body language open and inviting.

“I’m dead serious.”

A pause.

"Then, one last test. Sit here, and let Shinsou ask you a few questions. You'll blackout for a moment, but don't worry. I'll explain later."

"Okay?" They wondered what Shinsou's power was, some sort of

truth–

–All of a sudden they blinked and Shinsou was leaning back from across the desk with a satisfied grin. In front of them, the glass was empty and the clock was missing almost ten minutes.

“Well then.” Izuku grins from over the purple-haired boy's shoulder, smile wide and genuine and filled with joy. “Welcome to the team, *Extortion.”*

They couldn't help but smile.

It Rains On the Second Day

Chapter Summary

(Updated with final edits, 5/4/19)

Day 2: 6 hours, 2 minutes (6:02 am, local time)

It was quiet.

Five hours of no activity. No alarms. No sudden explosions or charging villains.

After their vanishing act the night before, there was nothing. The best they had was finding the truck, still idling, in a parking garage on the other side of the city.

An hour before dawn would color the sky over the false city, Bakugou Katsuki's alarm went off, snapping him away from his silent vigil and the screen he had been studying.

With a growl, he tore the sheets off his cot and headed out to get ready for the day.

He reached for his freshly cleaned costume and looked at his last gauntlet.

With a sigh, he left it behind and hit the showers. Without its twin, it would merely put him off-balance.

It was time to get ready, then. It was time to take the initiative.

Enough of this waiting bullshit.

Izuku leaned back as he looked over the various objectives they had acquired, laid out on tables on an unused floor of the Tower.

The two 'hostages' were both strapped to a table. The coffin, lined with fake jewels, stood upright beside them.

The table past that had the laptop, a printed copy of a 'top secret' document Mei hacked out of the server last night, the gold and silver UA emblem he had ripped from Bakugou's outfit, an opened safety deposit box with a fake gold bar, and beside it a fake diamond

necklace. To the side was the opened crate from the warehouse, with aluminum model guns sitting in rows.

Nine of fifteen.

Behind him on a broad expanse of white wall, he wrote out the other five he knew of.

Kill the Snitch
Steal the Icon Memorial from the Heroes
Break into the Penthouse
Lab 12
Office Executive Briefcase

He tapped the board gently, before writing in a personal objective.

Spy Games

A few minutes of contemplation and he had his plan. For the morning, anyway.

Briefcase: Hitoshi, Yuga, Momo, Kyouka.
Lab: Mei, Mina, Mezou, Reiko.

The rest would have to wait, though. Spy Games would need to be resolved before the day was over. He needed Extortion taken care of and Neito back before tomorrow, especially since he needed what the blonde copycat would have by tonight. Extortion's impact was also important, both from a practical perspective and a moral standpoint.

"Today is the hard one. Most of our momentum was lost... but we still have stealth. We need to focus. No fuck ups. No heavy fighting. In, and out. Tomorrow is the fighting, today is for completing our jobs. Surprise is lost. The heroes are on edge and ready to react, but that will cause stress. We have to keep the pressure on, keep them tense. I need them all worn and tired for tomorrow to work," Izuku muttered as the markers he held flashed across the wall, swapping colors and stashing the spare ones behind his ear and in his pockets. Mei's Holoscreen was very nice, and for monitoring their missions and watching over the city, it was invaluable. But this was planning and for that, it was better to use the physical medium.

Bright green ink and black lines on white paint. Rough plans, variations on the ones his team had been driven to read. The notes and references he had sent to all of his team over the group chat. It all needed to be brought to life.

He sketched rough layouts and lists, connecting Quirk details from each member of the teams with the results of a week of practicing and questions.

“Kyouka amplifies Hitoshi. Momo can make mirrors or backup belts for Yuga’s lasers. Mei’s hack should make Hitoshi the best spokesperson for the job…”

This was his preferred state. It was familiar. Debates about hero fights had been a source of entertainment, even before middle school. Even after becoming part of the hero society he admired, he still kept an eye on the forums in his much-reduced free time.

“Mei knows her way around labs and can supply Mezou with the tools needed. Reiko can bypass the security as long as she can see inside the rooms, and most of the lab floors have an observation room… Mina is the quick way through the doors and with Mei on-site, the alarms shouldn’t be a problem…”

After almost an hour, he tossed his third empty marker down and stepped back. The white wall covered in details about his plans, a dozen branching paths of potential problems covered half of the wall.

“Alright. There we are.”

One last glance and he was ready. Reaching up he tapped the communicator in his ear.

“Alright, everyone. To the vault. Briefing time.”

The volley of responses was comforting. His teams were ready.

Now to put the plans into play.

The sun was peeking over the wall circling the fake city, revealing dark clouds and heavy mist across the landscape.

Below the streets of the war, a cloaked form walked among the dark tunnels. His face was concealed by an ornate mask, eyes hidden behind amber glass and red light, letting him see in the pitch dark of his domain.

Izuku had spoken to him yesterday, brought up the possibilities. Had talked at length about who it would and could be, about the reasons why they would come.

And so he prepared. He paced the tunnels, checking each trap he had been given, adjusting each access point and reviewing the tunnel layouts. Along with him, his army marches. The rats and squirrels, the snakes and lizards, even the insects. They spread through the maze around him, taking up posts, preparing to ambush unlucky travelers. To defend their newfound home.

Above him, the first drops of heavy rain splashed against the cool stone. The rain changed his terrain but meant little in the long run.

As the figure stepped out into one of the three cisterns in the city, the faint light from the grates above showed his form.

A ragged brown and black cloak covered broad shoulders, armor showed through the rips, made to look like bone and chitin. Two long, curved horns reached from his hood. As he looked up, the light illuminated a black and grey mask shaped to look like an old weathered man, and red and amber eyes caught the light.

In his domain, the Animal of the villains readied for his part in the war.

Shouto stood at the back of the assembled hero team.

He was… disgruntled. He had come close to taking out the villains the night before, he had held the truck and its combatants. He had avoided going all out, he knew this. Was it because he underestimated them?

He knew the villains were a threat. He knew that–

Midoriya.

He was so *focused* on the threat of Midoriya. Of the boy he knew had willingly hunted down and faced the hero-killer, the boy who had dueled him and broken limbs to get him to realize his flawed logic… He had all but dismissed the rest of the villains.

That was his weakness. That was why he lost the fight the night before.

Clenching his left hand into a fist, faint flickers of fire curled around his hand.

Not again.

From now on he treats them with the respect, the *focus* they deserve.

He looked up, Bakugou (finally!) coming in, dressed in his black and red gear. Only now did he notice the blue patch, Bakugou's badge, that once adorned his collar, was missing. The one that had the UA emblem on it. The only badge that had it. It was the emblem with a bright and bold 1 in the center.

Just like the coffin that the villains had in the security videos.

Like the crate in the truck.

Once is happenstance. Twice is coincidence. Three times is enemy action.

“Objectives,” he muttered as the meeting started. He would tell Bakugou after the meeting, get descriptions of the other things the heroes had seen. If he was right, that would give them a way to find the other objectives.

It would give them a chance to prepare.

As the early morning rain began to pour down in earnest on the fake city, the villains moved into position.

The formal wear that had been damaged was ditched, replaced by jackets and armor. Weapons, hidden during the first day, had been readied and prepared. Used gear was replenished, damaged tools repaired.

A team of four raced through the tunnels of the sewers, ignoring and ignored by the army that rested there. They were known to the residents, after all.

To the south stood a laboratory where a vial was waiting for them. Hatsume Mei led the way, her team resting with her on a simple wheeled platform that raced through the tunnels.

Mina, armor still untouched by combat, containers of acids and neutralizers freshly replenished, crouched at the front, visor glowing slightly as she kept an eye out for any surprises. She would be their way in, melting through the grates in the sewers of the lab. To the back, a crouching Shouji Mezou rested, mask pulled up and tight, broad-brimmed hat pulled low against the occasional drop of water that fell on the group. His shirt, damaged in the fighting the day

before, had been replaced with a spare. His coat was still intact, made of sterner stuff. In front of him, dressed in a slightly thicker outfit, including a ragged black jacket, was Reiko, her hands fiddling with an RG13 handgun as she performed the last check, trying to soothe her nerves.

Mei stood in the center. Her dress had been replaced by a far more sensible pair of black cargo pants and a tight black turtleneck. She also had an armored jacket decorated with the same pink scale pattern as her dress, and a fluffy pink collar. Her face was covered by the same gas mask she wore the day before. At her side was a bag with a laptop ready to use, across her back was a long black case.

“Remember, what we want is on the 14th floor out of 20. No one can fuck up and set off the alarm, not until I hack the security anyway. If we do, then it’s a repeat of the museum clusterfuck.”

The rest nodded, and the platform took a turn before slowing.

“Alright, everyone. We’re here.”

Four figures stood inside an apartment with sewer access, adjusting suits and outfits for the last time. In the lead, with his green vest and white shirt replaced for a much brighter pastel purple and deep black combination, Hitoshi ran a hand through his now slicked back hair and looked around.

With sunglasses on and his outfit immaculate, he looked one part yakuza, one part lawyer. Behind him, his team mimicked his style.

Momo stood in a blue skirt and white dress shirt, sleeves rolled up and suitcase in hand, hair pulled back in a simple bun and slim glasses accentuating her look. Yuga stood in a sharp-cut suit, jacket buttoned up to conceal the focusing belt under it and hair parted in his usual style. The fourth member of their team, Kyouka, looked the most uncomfortable. Her black and white suit was clearly something she didn't like and wasn't used to wearing, and her hair was pinned back in a smart and short style that she kept reaching up to fiddle with, only for Momo to tap her hand away. She was carrying a purse and a suitcase as well.

The four were ready.

“Alright, remember the plan. I lead, the hack will emulate my power to the bots, but if we act suspicious it will still trigger their security

routines. Remember, we're here for a business deal, we are calm, collected professionals… and if anything goes wrong after we get the case, we have Yuga blow out the window and we take the express out."

That drew slight smiles.

"Let's go."

With one last adjustment to his tie, he stepped into the street, umbrella coming up to block the rain. The others followed suit as the four crossed the road, heading straight for the skyscraper in front of them.

The cameras were looped.

The bots were hacked.

It was a good day to be a villain.

5 days before the exam

Izuku stood at the whiteboard in front of the conference room, markers dancing across it as the rest of the villain team slowly filtered in.

The board was already filled with markings. Names connected by colored lines. Circled groups were marked against each other, abilities and known skills listed. His notebooks sat on a table in the corner.

Monoma was the first to talk.

"So, Kingpin, what does our wonderful Class 1-A leader want to do?"

There was a pause. Izuku set the marker down, sighing.

He stepped back and half-turned, looking at Monoma dead in the eyes.

"Today, we develop our playbook." Izuku put his hands in his pockets and looked over the rest of the room. "I don't have enough information to say how the exercise will go. I have assumptions. I have expectations. I have rough statistics." He looked back at the board. "Monoma, a question for you."

"What?"

“Could you, one on one, beat Iida?”

“Of course, I’m 1-B I co–”

“What about Tsunotori? You and she are friends, right? Could you beat her?”

“I–”

“Ojiro? Shishida? How about Bondo? Or Shiozaki?”

“…”

“I mean, they’re all mutation types, right? You can’t copy them. Are you saying you’re a match for them without a Quirk?”

Monoma sat back, face twisted unpleasantly.

“What about with Kendou at your side? Or me? Awase? Kaibara?” Izuku looked back. “Cause that's what we are doing.” He flipped the board over, revealing a 17x25 grid. “We are going to go through it and I am honestly going to ask ‘If you had to fight this person, would you win?’” He pointed at the hero names along the top of the board. “And you will answer yes, no or maybe.”

“Why?” That was Kaibara this time, eyes narrowing.

“Because we can’t afford to lose. We’re going to make this and I’ll edit it as we go, coming up with plans and solutions for the heroes. In the end, I want you to know exactly who you can beat. We are the villains. We have to pick our fights. Pick off the heroes one by one. But if you are going to lose, don't bother fighting. Run, evade, regroup for another run. This sheet… will be your guidebook.”

There was a beat of silence.

“Who wants to go first?”

The Invincible Door Fallacy

Chapter Summary

Shinsou plays the high class.
Mei hacks her way through her problems.
The Heroes demonstrate a level of investigative reasoning.

Day 2: 8 hours, 13 minutes (8:13 am, local time)

Hitoshi shook himself off and hung his umbrella on a nearby coat rack, the others following suit, as his eyes tracked over the room. It appeared to be a large atrium, stone tiling for floors, wood paneling leading to cream paint. Recessed lighting, warm but bright. A sitting area on a carpet. Two of the modified 'Securi-bots' stood patiently around the room, one behind the desk in the corner, one against the wall near the door. A pacing bot had a circuit near the far left wall and a civil-bot in a sunny dress sat working at a desk. With a quick but still casual pace, he led his procession of villains to the front desk and spoke up, enunciating clearly.

"Hello. I am here for my 8:15 appointment with Mister Cylon." Behind him there was what sounded like suspiciously choked laughter from one of the girls. He was betting Momo, sci-fi seemed like her thing.

The civil-bot secretary paused, apparently checking its computer screen.

"Of course, sir. Please take the elevator to floor 33."

With a nod, Hitoshi strode past, careful to maintain the appearance of a professional. Hacker had only managed to give him a short window with his 'hack-Quirk' and he didn't want to waste it. He didn't get the specifics, something about code to hardware gaps and how to hack pre-scheduled updates and how annoying the hard backups to the networked code every six hours were. In the end, she had managed to get the code to hack the modified bots in with the night-day activation signal. Beyond that, what she had installed was essentially an extra piece of software, which would take over once exposed to the audio trigger. He had spent a solid twenty minutes repeating it to her, in a multitude of different stresses so that it would consistently work.

His watch (designed to look like a high-end Rolex, thanks to Momo and Mei) had a countdown timer. Four hours until the next scheduled

reset. Hacker had made it clear that it was still possible for it to reset before that.

Yuga hit the elevator button. The doors opened and the other three filed in first, followed by Hitoshi.

He would need to be careful.

The elevator doors closed and the office team headed up.

“Drug-Runner, get the bars. Assault, plant the escape charges.”

The two quickly got to work, Mina filing the bars in each place where they met concrete, metal claws scoring them and her stronger acids getting to work, acrid smoke drifting from the liquids as they ate through the material.

Mei herself was farther down the tunnel at a junction box that connected the city’s water lines to the building's own water supply, including the fire suppression system. After a few tweaks to the connection, the water lines to the fire suppression system were set to only trigger at her command. With luck, that would keep the trick that Kingpin used to take out Bakugou from damaging her babies, and let her use it if necessary.

With a clang, the edge of the now removed grate hit the floor, and Mezou helped pull it aside.

The four of them filed through, coming out in the maintenance hallways under the research facility. Mei jogged over to the rows of circuit breakers and junction boxes several rooms down. With a hard connection in, she would be more than capable of shutting most of the security down.

However, the lab they needed was on a separate circuit, one in the lab itself.

She hoped her plan to deal with that would work.

Pulling up the schematics and double-checking her work, Mei began to disarm the building security.

Shouto waited to let the teams be dismissed before approaching Bakugou who stood looking over the holographic table map of the city sewers.

“What do you want, Half and Half?” Bakugou highlighted another tunnel for searching, adding it to the growing list. “Gonna choke and hold back again? Or maybe get taken out this time?”

Shouto chilled his expression and stiffened. “...No. I had a question. How many of the objectives do we have an image of?”

Bakugou snarled, before shifting to the next station a table over and pulling up four images. A coffin, sitting on display. A crate, caught by a street camera they had access to. A picture of a diamond necklace, with a silver engraving. And a picture of a civil-bot, this one looking remarkably like Mic-sensei.

Shouto took over the console. Bakugou stomped back towards his station.

Shouto paused, trying to relax, and then got to work. Computers weren't his strong suit, but he knew enough to get by. He started with pulling up Bakugou's Game Start appearance, off of the Hero Agency’s own cameras, isolating and highlighting the ‘UA-1’ patch that marked who was the hero team leader.

He then went looking through the archives for the city, using a hi-res recognition software to sort through hits as fast as possible.

He was surprised by how many he found.

Seventy-six. He sighed and clicked through them, dismissing the pictures without the right symbol or designs. In the end, he had eight hits that he could confirm from the system.

He glanced up at the frozen image of the coffin–

‘13’

–Then back down at the list.

There were more than these eight he had access to, obviously, but it was a solid start.

He opened each one, enlarging the images and comparing. The coffin was a double, he had both a system file and their video evidence. Same with the diamond necklace, and Mic-bot.

There was a golden bar, emblazoned with the sigil... ‘Held at the bank.’ He marked that down and linked it to the bank incident report.

A laptop in the government building and an ‘administrator-bot’ at the government building were both marked down and connected to the incident.

The last two were something he hadn’t seen yet.

A cape, torn and shredded with the number 14 on it, was stored in what was apparently a memorial inside – inside the Hero Agency. He noted that down and made a memo to check out how secure the memorial was later.

The other…

‘Gotcha.’

“Bakugou.”

“WHAT, Half and Half?” Bakugou snarled, looking at him, only to see Shouto staring back with a fierce expression.

“I have a lead.”

Suddenly Bakugou’s smile twisted to something dangerous. He stepped over and looked at the terminal.

“Let's see it.”

And so, Shouto explained.

Fumikage and Shihai walked through the tunnels with confidence and comfort born of being associated with the dark. The faint glow of Fumikage's outfit cast the dark, wet tunnels with glimmers of red light.

Not before long, they stepped out into the cistern that Animal had claimed. The dark was broken by shallow battery-powered lanterns hung in the recesses of the area, the water of the cistern running into the pit below them, while the large catwalk they stood on was covered in what looked like an apartment. A bed and camp kitchen took up one side, while a table with maps stood in the center.

“Welcome,” the deep rumble of Kouda Kouji’s voice greeted them, the tall cloaked and masked figure standing on an upper level, rats scurrying away to carry out orders. The two goths bowed at their ally.

“Hello, Kouji. Apologies for not meeting up with you earlier, we have

been quite busy so far. Shihai and I figured that since we are tasked with allying with you for the day, we would bring you a meal to relax and discuss the circumstances of our confederation over." Fumikage gestured at the cooler he carried and the 10-gallon capacity drink cooler that Shihai carried with deft ease.

"A mad banquet in the darkness, you could say," Shihai murmured, ignoring the sudden glare from his avian friend as Kouji held back snickering.

"Must you constantly bring up that accursed meme?" Fumikage grumbled, already moving to lay out the meal across the table. Kouji helped set up by dragging a duo of recliners and a couch, some of several dragged here by him and Mezou in the early morning of the first day. After all, the sewers were a fallback and rest point. Making it comfortable was only wise.

The three fell into easy conversation (or gesticulation, in Kouji's case), Kouji using the map to mark out preferred locations for ambushes or patrols.

Hitoshi stepped through the crowded cubicles, fake office workers following their algorithms around the floor. A crowd of smartly designed expensive things, doing nothing of importance.

What a metaphor.

He and his crew came to a stop before the heavy wooden door of the top floor office.

Another secretary next to the door paused before vocalizing that they could go in.

The four stepped through the doorway and Hitoshi had to resist the urge to facepalm. From the sound of it, Kyouka was holding back a snicker.

Great.

The robot, a full seven feet tall, with short coiffed blond hair and a squared off face, was very clearly a caricature of All Might.

In a gaudy red, white, and blue suit.

Yuga twitched at Hitoshi's side, face pale and expression frozen. By

the clenching of the Frenchman's hands, it was clear that his sensibilities were very much offended. Hitoshi found the irony there apparent but ignored it.

“Welcome, I hear you’re my next appointment!”

Yeah, fuck this. He checked the door was closed and spoke up.

“The Kingpin sends his regards,” Hitoshi enunciated clearly, watching as the Might-bot got twitchy, servos flexing and reacting before its LED eyes turned red and then back to pale blue.

“Hatsume Industries override active. Awaiting your command.” The voice was cracked, the system in charge of the voice apparently being fucked with.

Hitoshi nodded and looked back. “Kyouka, Momo, be on watch. Kyouka if you hear anything tap my left arm. Yuga, you're at my side and when we get the goods you can burn the suited menace here. Momo, keep an eye out for quick exits.” He turned back to the bot. “Shinsou says: take us to the safe.”

The lab team were all in a side room, a floor below the laboratory they needed to be in. Mei had told Mina and Reiko to form a small opening and install her wireless connectors to the hardwired security system in the wall space in the floor above her.

As Hacker finished installing the latest of her wireless connectors to the system, her laptop beeped. She glanced over the screen, tapping a few keys as she tracked how her programs were doing before smiling.

“And with that, the security is ours. All we have left to worry about is the Securi-bots. Mezou, Mina, that's you.” The two nodded and Mezou advanced to the door and then up the stairs to the lab floor, Mina at his side. Mei set her laptop down and flipped her controls to the remote console in her goggles. As she finished up, the faint sounds of crunching metal echoed through the floor. With the security system hers, however, she had already started feeding looped footage out of the building to the reserve server. With that, she could see the cameras through the floor herself.

She marched through the halls after the fighters of her team, Reiko in her ghoulish outfit at Mei’s side as both security and an ‘extra pair of hands.’ Mezou was quite efficient, Mei noted. Skulls smashed or ripped from the bodies. The necks broken or crushed underfoot. He

was quite fast about it too. Almost two-thirds of the civil-bots they came across were killed by Mezou's hands.

That was without Mei's babies.

She was almost impressed.

Eventually, the two girls caught up to the fighters, who stood by a much stronger reinforced doorway. Mei tapped her goggles, the same type of prototype density tracker she had given the 'demo crew' turning on. She could see the door as a thick solid color. It was heavy, easily three times thicker than most doors and designed to hold off a siege. The rest of the wall, however…

"Morons. Mezou, do you know what the Invincible Door Fallacy is?"

The silver-haired bruiser glanced her way and one by one the mouths across his arms smiled, before speaking.

"I do."

He then turned and put his fist right through the far less reinforced wall next to the door.

Watching the feeds from both teams, Izuku sat in a very comfortable recliner, eyes flickering across screens. His communicator, with the mic muted on his end (for now), played their conversations to him.

His eyes flickered to movement on a previously static screen. There…

Twelve heroes, ready for combat. Six of them headed towards the west… where the biggest sewer entrance in this section of the city was. But the other six... Ha! Finally!

"Thought they would never figure it out."

Izuku sat up straighter and tapped his comms.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it seems the heroes have finally remembered basic math and have found our oh-so-edited records..."

7 days before the exam

Izuku sat on the pale white beach, looking out over the ocean.

The deep blue-black of the water glistened silver and white with each crest. The light of the moon danced over the waves.

Izuku pulled his hoodie closer, looking out at the sea.

Beside him was his school bag, and in his hands, was the rulebook.

His decision to focus on being a villain in the exercise, to give it his all, had kept him awake. So, with the edge of midnight fast approaching, he had made his way to the familiar grounds of Dagobah Beach, sitting and letting his focus wander.

The sound of footsteps made him look over his shoulder, to see the thin form of All Might. The man didn't say anything as he approached, eventually coming to a stop next to Izuku. The tall blond sighed and slowly lowered himself to rest beside his protégé.

For several minutes they sat there, focusing.

Eventually, All Might broke the silence.

"Worried about the exercise?" he asked, voice light-hearted and gaze focused on the blue-black of the nearly invisible horizon.

"...Yeah." Izuku's words were soft, voice tight with stress and exhaustion.

"Hmmm. And are you worried that you won't win? Or worried about what winning means?" Toshinori mused. He had already talked with Nedzu and Aizawa and he knew his protégé well enough to know where his mind would go. Izuku hesitated at the question.

"...If I win. If, as the villain, I push and destroy the heroes, does that make me… a bad person?"

"No. I think that makes you a great teacher." Izuku blinked up at the taller blond. "Peace is a wonderful thing. But you, and for that matter, your class, are on a warpath. They need to know what strife is like. The USJ was… bad. Hosu was worse. If your class keeps getting into things like this… then they need to know how to deal with far worse villains. The League is dangerous and powerful, but they are unorganized. There are far stronger villains out there, far smarter and more efficient groups of criminals. Even if they are less dangerous."

For a moment silence, and then.

“Thank you… Yagi-sensei.”

Izuku stood and slowly walked away. But as Toshinori watched his back, he could see the tightening of shoulders. The force of each step was not arrogant, it was confident. Yagi remembered a faint bit of a poem, something he had read in a journal or had heard second-hand.

‘And when he stepped, he claimed the world.
Not as a conqueror.
Each step was sure. Each step was destined.
For he was Lord.’

Yagi looked up at the stars and moon above the ocean.

“You would have liked this kid, sensei,” he whispered. “He feels like you did.”

Half an hour later, he too headed home.

Downpour Success Stories

Chapter Summary

> Things seem to go... right? This has to be a trick.
> Yeah. Things go wrong.

Day 2: 9 hours, 1 minute (9:01 am, local time)

Izuku glanced over the screens, taking in the camera angles. Twelve heroes out of eighteen... There would be only six heroes in the base if he sent the signal now. Five if he counted the Extortion variable as a villain. The issue stemmed from the fact that Kacchan was still there. While his plans could work around him, all it would take is one spark of understanding and the entire gambit would fail. All Kacchan needed was to know even vaguely what was going on behind his back and it would all be over.

So the gambit would have to wait.

Into the sewers, one of the hero teams went. Three scouts, three brawlers. Layered offensive. Not bad. They were far from the trapped area though. It would take time before they fell into the web Kouji had woven.

Hagakure, Shouda, and Tsuyu as the scouts. Smart plays one and all. Hagakure was a natural stealth specialist, Asui was comfortable in the dark wet environments and her suit had the built-in headlights, Shouda was quiet and fairly small. His Quirk, Twin Impact was also useful. The ability to double any force he outputs made him remarkably fast and agile for someone of his demeanor and his hits were twice as strong. With his boxing skills, he was also a solid melee fighter.

The three were troublesome, but not unbeatable for the sewer crew. The issue was the second wave.

The brawlers: Shishida, Tetsutetsu, and Kirishima.

Neito had been useful with the breakdown of his teammates, even those whose Quirks he couldn't use. Shishida had been ranked slightly lower than the Harden and Iron combo, but not much. While Kirishima and Tetsutetsu could be an immobile blockade in the tunnels, Shishida was fast, agile and strong.

All he had to do was be the hammer to the anvil, and if he backed up any of the three scouts… that was a dangerous play. Even using Dark Shadow might not achieve a win. The Quirk was held back by size as much as it was by light. In the cramped tunnels, it would be stronger, but also not fit easily. Shihai, also known as Blackout, was a solid combatant and not a bad shot, but wasn't the best all around. Animal, Kouji himself… well, he might be able to land a hit or even pull off a win on Shishida if push came to shove.

They would lose against the anvil.

Well. Good thing they stocked up on traps.

He started to tap out a message on his phone, keeping his eyes on the monitors and his ears on the two teams running infiltration.

Izuku grinned.

The heroes were going after the bait, and with the force lead by Todoroki, Uraraka, *and* Iida, that would be a success. Which means they would have the Snitch-bot from the downtown police precinct (aka the second most alarmed and security rigged building in town) soon.

That also meant that before long, two objectives would be in one location.

With the pieces in place… all he would have to do is draw out the greatest threats.

For now, however, he had teams to watch.

Hitoshi followed behind the Might-bot, hands slowly clenching and releasing. Here, at the point where he was almost to the goal, where things make it or break it, he felt… strangely focused. Yeah, he had gone up with Izuku, but that was with *Izuku.* They quite literally had walked through a step by step plan through the museum building. Now, Hitoshi was the leader, the shot-caller. It seemed like the world had come into sharper focus.

He clocked his changes. The incessant heartbeat that seemed steady, far too slow for the situation. The cool air on his skin and the tension in his muscles. The sweat on his neck was there, but not as much as he expected. Not like when he was in the Sports Festival trying to make it through the crowds.

The comforting weight of the guns hidden in his jacket was there, as well as the weights he knew were the small breaching charges for the safe if he needed them, and the weight of heavy brass in his pocket.

He glanced at his watch casually. 8:43.

There was plenty of time left.

He continued following the bot, team tense around him as things became sharper and more focused. Finally, they reached the elevators again and were led to the farthest lift. One he knew didn't lead to the lower floors (Mei had confirmed it). They were now leaving the ‘day to day’ style company offices for the ‘high security’ top floor offices instead.

Where security would have immediately set off the alarm without the bot’s signal.

The four followed the bot into the elevator, the doors closing, the lift starting. They only had a few seconds but–

“Take a breath, relax. We have this. Keep cool and move confidently. Mei only got a glimpse of this floor, but the bot should take us straight there.”

They all nodded or agreed under their breaths, and loosened their stances slightly.

The doors opened and they followed the bot out of the elevator.

They were in a long well-kept hallway, but Hitoshi instantly noted a few very important facts. The hallway was clean. No tables or chairs. Just a rug on the floor, and flush-to-the-wall paintings.

Only one door at the far end.

It was a kill box. Hitoshi's eyes locked on a discrepancy. A smooth, circular hatch stationed dead center in the middle of the hallway. The small black orbs on each end which he knew to be cameras.

This was a trapped room. He was suddenly betting that one of the steps to open the next door would involve resetting the Might-bot.

He should have prepped more explosives.

Whispering in a soft calm voice, he began preparing for things to go to shit as they marched down the hallway.

They would have to time this perfectly and then take a fast way out.

Mei frowned, biting back a sigh as she stood in the control room for the lab, fingers dancing across the computer as she looked up how to actually get her team to that fucking vial. She was looking over the regulation schematics. With the security turned off, all she needed to do was acquire the vial.

The vial currently held inside a massive piece of machinery that looked one part centrifuge, one part *fusion reactor.*

That wasn't the annoying part.

The annoying part was that it was a goddamn *logic puzzle.* Mei *hated* logic puzzles, the engineering was always clunky, the control schemes misleading and the designs accomplished nothing.

Finally, she found what she thought was the right sequence.

She typed it in, watched as the tumbler-like mechanism slowly twisted and lined back up, interlockings steel plates finally slowing– fuck. That's not the right vial.

She sighed and leaned her head forward, only to hear a twisting groaning metal sound.

There was Mezou, one hand turned into thin prehensile tentacles and ripping apart the center of the mechanism.

“Uh, Me–”

“Got it.” With a slow pull of the tentacles, the vial they were looking for was pulled out from behind the now bent and cracked divider.

She stared and suddenly laughed. “Let me guess–”

“–The Indestructible Door Fallacy,” Reiko finished as she stepped up with a smirk and opened a small steel case, revealing a slot to store the vial.

Mezou dropped it in, and Mei looked at her team.

“Let's leave.”

The four turned away and began to trace their way out of the complex.

Tenya and Tsunotori raced through the streets while Sero and Uraraka swung and lept through the city streets above them. Behind them and following along, Todoroki and Rin kept a solid pace, shadowing them to the destination.

A police office several blocks away, halfway between the southern edge of the city and the center.

It was where the thing Todoroki had found the file for was held. A Prisoner-bot, the sigil painted across its chest marked with the number 15.

“Crime-bot A. Turned itself in last night. Apparently, there is a timer going until it’s passed on to the hero location. Another 12 hours.”

They joined back up at the door of the police office. Tenya swiped his ID card through the scanner, letting the doors open and revealing a heavily alarmed and guarded building with dozens of bulked up civil-bots dressed as police officers. Tenya noted several heavy weapon systems and quite a few security doors and choke points even in the first few rooms. The heroes rushed past the Cop-bots with barely a flash of their IDs.

Ten minutes later, the six of them stared with shock at the figure sitting in the cell. Long shaggy hair, a perpetual grimace painted on its face, red eyes, and a black and orange jumpsuit.

It was a bot modeled after Aizawa-sensei.

They didn’t really know where to go from there.

“Now.”

The Might-bot spun around to face the villains, before getting hit with a pair of brass knuckles wrapped around Hitoshi’s hand, the cheek and the left side of the robot’s painted-on face denting inwards as it staggered back.

Behind Hitoshi, Kyouka sent her ear jacks into the camera above the purple-haired leader. Yuga spun around, ripping his jacket open and sending a line of light flashing across the camera on the far side and up through the ceiling into the hatch above them.

The hatch was already opening and jammed halfway, the lower half of

an automated turret already half-deployed only for a spear to slam up through the gap and into the mechanism, Momo twisting it to damage the gears and structure.

She and Yuga turned back to see Hitoshi twisting the robot's head off and tossing it aside, before lifting the rest of the 'corpse' and leaning it against the sturdy locked door.

"Alright. That failed. Plan B. Yuga, please destroy the crime against fashion."

Hitoshi stepped aside, Yuga blasting down the door to the top floor safe room.

Kyouka and Momo dove through the opening first, Momo leading with her spear and Kyouka covering her flanks as they rushed two Securi-bots, shoving them up against the wall. Momo pinned one and Kyouka tore the other apart.

Hitoshi strode past them, pulling off his coat and letting it drop, revealing two holstered guns on a complex harness that was hidden under the silk weave, and a large round container strapped to the small of his back. He pulled one gun as he walked, shooting the visual sensors of another bot coming around the next corner as Yuga stepped in, breathing slow and deep to try and settle his slightly aching stomach.

Momo left her spear behind, forming another as she joined Hitoshi, her jacket having also been ditched, revealing the large section of the back of her shirt that was cut away.

Kyouka also shed her outfit, the button-up shirt and jacket being tossed on the now smoking pair of bots, sparks arcing from two breached power lines. Under her outfit, she was wearing an artistically distressed black band tank top for a band called 'Salvation Murder' and a slim-fitted backpack strapped to her spine.

Yuga simply pulled his burned shirt open, leaving the focusing lens clear of obstruction and dropping his jacket on the now smoking pile.

The four marched across the floor, and upon testing the next door and finding it locked, Hitoshi placed a small bead of an explosive on the door right above the bolt and stepped back, a small circular disk placed over it. A few seconds later he pulled out a detonator, pointing it at the door and pushing the red button. With a bang, the door blew open, the handle and a solid chunk of the frame going missing.

The luxurious office they stepped into was well-designed. Mahogany wood flooring and furniture, deep plush rugs, simple geometric lines and pleasing layout.

It took less than a minute to find the safe and approximately three to have the briefcase out of it.

Kyouka's hearing made a tumbler combination lock nearly worthless after all.

"King, time to intercept?"

"None. The alarm never left the building."

"Really? Why is that?"

"Mei finished first and decided to do you a favor. However, you've got the fire alarm just starting to go off and that's on a different circuit. Take a fast way down."

"Understood," Hitoshi drawled. A moment later he was looking back at the crew. "Ladies and Frenchman. We take the express."

Momo grinned, but Kyouka and Yuga both looked hesitant.

With that, they prepared for their escape.

Tenya had just finished escorting the bot through the downpour when the alert popped up. Almost immediately the comms crackled on.

"Round Face, take Sero, Tsunotori, Todoroki, and Rin. Go to the alarm on the top floor of the big-ass tower to the northeast. Marking it for you all now. Iida, get that fucking robot in here so we can interrogate it."

Nodding, the hero teams split up, heading out.

Hitoshi planted the last of his charges on the plate glass of a 35th-floor window, the one looking over the half of the city from its position. The rain across the city would make it less visible, but also more dangerous.

Hitoshi would admit he considered that a plus with how his pulse beat in his ears.

Momo quickly made three simple harnesses, a pulley on what looked like bike handlebars, and a long noose-like stirrup under it, sized for each of them.

Looking out the window, Hitoshi peered through the downpour until he saw it, the slowly flashing trio of lights that was their target.

He unhooked the round container, unsealing it to reveal a long coil of cord, nearly half a kilometer of high tensile cable. Momo walked around the room, wrapping smaller, higher density cables to each of the three support beams around the office. Kyouka punched holes and helped her thread the anchor points.

Then Momo focused and extruded a long-range grapple gun, one that could embed a metal point half a kilometer and make it stick. With a few minutes of work and a last check of the anchors, she nodded, hefting the now loaded gun and readying her aim.

With Momo ready, Hitoshi triggered the bomb, blowing out the window to reveal cold winds carrying freezing sprays of water.

Hitoshi wondered if this is what being a daredevil was. This rapid rush of adrenaline and fear and *want*.

He couldn't get enough of it.

With a whir and twang of tension, the cord was shot away. A minute later, the gun pulled everything taut, connecting the three anchors and the line together.

“See you at the bottom!” Hitoshi all but cackled, strapping the suitcase to his back and hooking his handles over the line. With a grin, he stepped up and pushed off. He was on the world's most intense zip line, the rapid addition of three other weights only making his ride downhill go faster.

Yeah.

This is the life.

As he touched down and watched the rest of his team join him, Yuga shaking slightly and Kyouka cursing under her breath. Satisfied they were fine, he nodded to Momo.

With a sly smile, she formed her own detonator.

The empty office far above was turned into a ball of fire.

Hagakure Tooru breathed long and slow, steps carefully placed along the outer side of the stream of water flowing through the sewer.

She had seen several rats perched throughout the sewers so far, but it seemed her luck was holding.

She was more concerned with the matte black, nearly unseeable triplines that connected to what appeared to be some sort of landmine, though the one she had dismantled revealed a bag of that sticky red substance the villains were shooting.

Yeah, not fun.

So, she kept her steps careful and voice quiet, the small pen-light in her hands giving just enough glow for her light-bending fingers to make the path before her visible.

She never noticed the small black rat that trailed behind her.

Asui Tsuyu was dealing with similar problems, though her flood-light helmet made finding her way easier.

Suddenly, the silence she was careful about was disrupted, a faint yell echoing through the tunnels, its source muddled by the stone structure.

“Report, kero, who was that.”

“Hagakure. Still alive.”

“This is Hammer. The three of us are alive.”

“Shouda, kero, you there?”

Nothing but static.

This was bad.

Then it got worse.

The earpiece shrieked, making Tsuyu flinch and grasp her skull. A rough voice, sounding sickly and covered by static, passed through the line.

“COme intO THe PArloUr, sAId the SPiDer to tHE fLiES.”

The line went dead.

Scratch that. The comms *all* went dead.

“Well. That's not a good thing.”

Behind her, a black mouse peered at her from the shadows.

1 day before the exam

“Alright. Aizawa-sensei will be here to open for us in less than twenty. Everyone got their stuff together? Last bathroom checks and snack grabs? No one needs anything from the outside? Mei?”

“All good,” the pink-haired mechanic called from the hood of the luxury sedan.

“Cool. Everyone here remembers the rules?” Izuku waved the notebook in his hands around. “I don’t need anyone fucking us over like Extortion is doing to Bakugou, you got it?”

A chorus of laughs and affirmation greeted the question. Izuku grinned.

“Good. Now remember, if you survive through day one to day two’s lunch, I have some very nice lunch boxes from Lunch Rush-sensei! I hear they are mighty tasty, everyone's favorites were nicely packed up…”

That got a few straightened spines and attentive stares. “Remember the plans. Listen to your teams. No lone wolves, no fighting for glory. If you’re outnumbered or outclassed, just go, get out. Choose your fights, choose your targets and no mercy. We’re here to put on a show and to win.”

He saw the headlamps of Aizawa's car approach.

“Now, let's get this shindig started.”

Mazes and Demons in the Dark

Chapter Summary

Sewer team undergoes some... frightening experiences.

Day 2: 9 hours, 45 minutes (9:45 am, local time)

Uraraka Ochako and her crew sighed, looking at the now iced-over hole in the side of the building. It took them too long to get there and by the time they were close, the entire upper floor was on fire.

Ochako started heading up to help, Todoroki already going up and moving back through the building as he iced over the last few smoldering piles of ash and metal. Five minutes of looking through the wreckage later, she called back to Bakugou and the rest of the base crew.

“It’s a bust. The entire floor is a burned-out wreck with piles of molten robots.” She might as well open with the important bits.

“Fuck. I figured. That alarm was set off by smoke according to the system. Deku probably had his team bail early. Head to support the sewer team.” There was a click and Bakugou spoke again, *“Sewer team, check in.”*

“...” The lack of reply was unnerving and made Ochako swallow a lump in her throat. What had happened, where was the sewer team?

“SEWER TEAM, CHECK IN,” Bakugou growled, a faint crackling of explosions echoing over the line.

The voice that answered didn’t belong to one of the heroes.

“Sorry man, but the heroes you have requested cannot come to the phone right now.” A chuckle came across the line, *“They’re dealing with quite a few problems, including a very hacked comm frequency. Hope you don't mind. We’ll let... maybe two head back to you? Sometime tomorrow, perhaps?”*

“...Uraraka, get your team back to base now. Whoever this is? You're gonna fucking die.”

A giggle. Another voice chimes in dryly. *“I wish you luck with that, you clearly need it.”*

The line goes dead with what sounds like a dial tone.

She sighed as nothing but expletives came from the line, before dropping her end of the comm call. She called her crew to gather. The rain and Todoroki had quenched the fires, and now it was her turn to let them know what was up.

She expected that things were going to get worse. Given how things have gone so far?

She was worried about how long everyone would still be up and active.

Izuku stared at Sen and a chuckling Yosetsu as they cut off the comm line, and smiled, “Perfect.” He looked back as the elevator door opened to admit Hitoshi and Mei. They walked in, suitcase and vial in hand. “I’ll contact the sewer crew. Have them set off the Maze Protocol. Mei, I need you to fully arm everything. In the meantime…”

Izuku turned back and began typing.

“We still have one last missing objective to track down.”

“Alright, comms are down with the sewer teams, but we have the planned routes we had for the scouts and the combat team. Combat team should be able to handle themselves for now, but the scouts need to be found and brought back together as fast as possible when we push through. Clear the tunnels as fast as you can. Iida and Uraraka, get to Frog Face. Tsunotori, Todoroki, find Shouda. Me and Tape Face here are going to meet up with combat and push after Invisibitch.”

He pulled up the sewer map across the table, already marked with his messy and aggressive scrawl to show where the teams would enter to reach their target’s last known position.

“The base is going on lockdown as we leave. Everyone stays fucking alert and ready. We have two objectives and a prisoner on base. Alarms stay on, people stay awake, no fucking around. Got it?! Tokage, Komori, keep the blonde fucker where he is. Fukidashi, Tsuburaba keep a lookout for incoming and don't be afraid to blast the fuckers. Kodai, the console is yours. Rin and Ojiro, set up patrol routes through the building. If they get in, take them out or die trying.”

He turned his back, not paying attention to the disgruntled body

language Ojiro threw his way or how Komori shrunk under the expectation.

Uraraka shifted uncomfortably as the tension grew.

“Move it people!” the blond-haired leader called out as he walked away, the group splitting up slowly as they headed to their respective assignments.

Todoroki, Uraraka, and Iida exchanged glances of unease.

Tsuyu leaped up and moved along the ceiling once more, the squishing sound of the paint claymore rigged in a small alcove above the waterline triggering. Behind her, the stretch of wall where she had stood a second ago was colored a bright, nearly glowing, red color.

‘Another of those. Simple but effective,’ she mused, before looking at the map. While comms and the GPS were both disrupted by whatever the villains had done, she could still mark how far she had gone manually. Sadly, she had been drifting off her designated path for almost half an hour now. Several tunnels were blocked off with brand new grates and various obstructions. The ones with grates that she should have been able to open were boarded up or had the grates missing altogether, the only evidence left was the occasional scorch marks in the walls of the entrances and the strangely shaped and fused edges.

She sighed and carefully continued forward, senses on high alert.

That's when it happened.

A flicker, a change of light, as she turned down a new causeway.

There was a villain she recognized from earlier. She had been assisting Tsuburaba near the bank when she had seen him.

Kuroiro.

The villain grinned and the tunnel behind him became pitch black.

“You should run, little frog.”

Then the black rushed down the tunnel like a flood of tar, shaped like hands and spikes and reaching arms.

She panicked, sinking under the flash of fear as she remembered a different, paler, reaching hand. She made to turn, already moving as

her panic pushed her to run.

Not fast enough.

A click and whoosh of compressed gasses, a splat, sticky paste covering across her back as her foot tripped on an unseen line in the dark.

A pause. The darkness faded. Looking back revealed that Kuroiro had disappeared. For a moment, she thought she was saved, but then her comm clicked on.

"You're dead, kid. Head on up and I'll pick you up," Ectoplasm-sensei's voice came over her radio and she sighed in a mix of relief and disappointment as she slumped to the side of the tunnel.

She reached out to the fresh red paint and dragged a line through it, watching as it already began to set into a hard sticky casing.

Tooru sidled over yet another tripwire. Whoever had set this all up was a vicious bastard. There would be thin silver lines, nothing more than cobwebs, just above the waterline. Then a darker string, painted black, that stretched around head height to just below her waist in one direction or another, leading off into pipes or alcoves and run through to simple bombs. Paint balloons with blasting charges were hung inside manhole lines and the piping above her.

The manholes which were *fused shut so she couldn't leave.*

She sighed quietly and carefully moved down a new passage. Her route was centered around a large open tunnel that led towards the cistern to just east of the city center. There were two more to the western corners, but with the street manholes all being welded shut (and when the fuck did Awase have time to do that?) they had been forced west to enter through the runoff tunnels.

Which meant walking back across half the city to get to where they wanted to set up.

Which would have been fine, if a little annoying.

If not for the fact that the fastest, largest tunnel had been filled with enough traps to make even Kirishima and Tetsutetsu think twice. So here she was, moving along the side tunnels to find a way for them to reach their destination.

She leaned and stepped over another tripwire and under its buddy when she sees it.

A rat.

Not a cute mouse or a tiny rat. No, it had to be half a foot long, thicker than her forearm and looked mean. It was sniffing the air around it.

That's… not good.

It turned its eyes her direction, sniffing the air. Tooru very carefully stepped back from it, foot resting as quietly as she could make it, getting away from the trap and clear of the water on the bottom of the tunnel.

Kouda was a villain.

She suddenly had a sinking suspicion that he was currently the biggest threat to her.

“hahaHaHAHA**HAH*AHAHA!”***

Kirishima ducked back into the side tunnel, the streak of black claws and yellow eyes leaving massive lines carved into the floor of the tunnel he had just vacated, and vanished once more down a side tunnel.

This was bad.

THIS WAS VERY BAD.

He had been separated from Shishida less than five minutes ago by Dark Shadow all but body-checking him down a side tunnel, before collapsing part of it behind them as the Quirk vanished back down the hall.

He and Tetsutetsu had been yelling for each other before repeated attacks by Dark Shadow had driven them apart.

Now Kirishima was fucking lost in the sewers, cold and wet from the rain.

“NOT MANLY SHADOW BRO!” he called out, skin hardened as he slowly looked around. Luckily there wasn’t much in the way of traps in this area.

“TETSU!” he called out, “TETSU? SHISHIDA?” He listened, spinning slowly. “CAN YOU HEAR ME!?”

Nothing.

“Oh god.”

He looked for the nearest manhole and rushed over, just to see that it, like all the others, was sealed shut. With no leverage he wouldn't be able to punch through it, not before– Shit!

“hahaHaHAHA**HAHA*HAHA!”***

Kirishima dove out of the tunnel and into another, Dark Shadow rushing past once more, before doubling back and vanishing into the tunnels.

“NOT COOL MAN!”

Would it ever *stop laughing?*

Bakugou paused and looked down from where he was running along the street.

“...Shitty Hair?”

Hanta paused at his side. “Kiri? What–” Bakugou paused and turned, hand slapping over Hanta’s mouth.

Then he heard it; screams from the ground, almost drowned out by the rain, and a deep echoing laughter.

“Hold back. I’m getting us in.”

Bakugou darted to the nearest manhole entrance, and held out his hand, stance braced.

Izuku watched a feed, the flash of explosions clear even through the rain, as he compared where Bakugou and Sero were in relation to the tunnels.

“Mei, seal off the Tower basement. No one in or out through the underground. When we move to the next stage, take the alleys.”

Nods all around. Izuku pulled out his phone, shooting off texts to the

sewer team to retreat and pull back to the Tower, taking or burning anything they may have left behind in the cistern.

“Neito should be lucid by now and Extortion should be trying to get him free and getting ready to let us into the base. Hitoshi, bring your prototype gear.”

Hitoshi sighed and nodded, “Should I be ready for things to go loud? Extortion is still in place after all.”

Izuku mulled over the plan, eyes closed as he thought over multiple of them, discarding plenty out of hand and focusing on the few he needed. “Yes. It’s almost time. The moment we see Bakugou and his teams actually enter the sewers, cut their comms entirely. I’ll text Extortion to start us off and then we move in. I believe Neito is looking forward to his lunch break.”

He grinned, looking back at the feed of the Hero Agency and its lack of activity “They even have two objectives waiting for us. How nice of them.”

There was a beep and a phone was pulled from a pocket and a soft smile.

‘10 minutes. Get ready.’

“What’s up?” her partner asked, and she quickly but calmly closed out of the messenger app.

“Not much. Just family letting me know they miss me.” A lie. It was the boss and his message was clear.

“Awww, that's cute!” came the half-squee from the shorter girl, only getting a half-smile back.

“Thanks!”

Over the shorter girl’s shoulder, she could see Neito smirking as he watched her.

4 days before the exam

Hitoshi leaned back and looked up, breathing out slowly as his breath misted in the cool air of the morning. He had dressed in the same UA jumpsuit he wore for the Sports Festival. Nearby stood the rest of the

villains. It was an hour before class would start and Izuku called them all in early.

Some were upset with this.

Hitoshi knew what was coming and as such was merely resigned.

Izuku wanted to try something stupid.

It was Neito who asked, surprisingly focused and calm for his usual demeanor, “What do you want us to do here, Midoriya?”

The green-haired demon smiled, “Simple. I want to spar. All of you versus me. At the same time.”

There was silence.

“What the fuck,” came the whispered words of someone in the group. It looked like it was the headband dude from Class B… Awasa? Awase? Something like that.

Izuku simply grinned and walked out onto the field.

“Come on, it’ll be fun.”

People hesitated. Shouji stepped forward and took a stance. Soon after the rest followed, forming a heroic bulwark in front of their leader.

Then there was suddenly a spark of energy up Midoriya's arm, glowing red lines stretching across his skin.

The first strike was turned into a toss, the rushing Sen grabbed and thrown back into the crowd.

And then Izuku stepped into the gap he had made, and with a fist, the ground surged and fractured.

40 minutes later, everyone but Izuku was on the ground groaning in pain.

Except for Hitoshi, who had conceded as his first step and tried to nap through the rest of his team’s slaughter.

Izuku was sitting on a pile of shattered and half-melted stone chunks, which had been fused by Awase to try and keep him in place. He scribbled and muttered into his notebooks as he marked down

interesting things he had noticed over the last half hour of kicking his entire team's ass.

“Sweet. I have a solid start now. We have 20 minutes left, so I suggest all of you hit the showers and take your time to relax a bit.” The faint array of moans and groans made Izuku smile slightly. “Or we could go another rou–” And suddenly he was alone on his makeshift throne.

Taking the Castle

Chapter Summary

> While the Paragon is Away, the Kingpin comes to Play.
>
> Warning. There is a minor trigger warning for body horror and self-mutilation. It's not vivid, but there. To skip, scroll from the + + + signs to "Larceny... is back in business".
>
> ENJOY!

Day 2: 10 hours, 18 minutes (10:18 am, local time)

The Hero Agency was a large, square building. It was surrounded by main streets on two sides and a side-street on a third. It was backed by an apartment building that was two floors shorter than it.

From the plans that Mei and Izuku had… shall we say *acquired,* they knew that the ten-story building was set up as half operations center, half dorms for the heroes to sleep in.

The first floor was laid out with a large meeting room and a secure atrium, set up to provide the hero team with an advantage when holding down the fort against an assault. The second floor was the forensics bay and research area, the third the hero armory and workshop for modifying their gear, and the fourth was a medical wing. The fourth floor had two corner security offices which provided a broad view of the surrounding streets, the alley, and the neighboring building.

On the fifth floor were the holding cells.

Floors six and up were the dorms for the heroes to stay in.

Izuku and his circle of friends had spent some time studying the layout, both over the last few days before the exercise started, and throughout the past day. They had gone through and narrowed down plans and considered options for retreat and attack several times. They had generally planned for a stealth assault, to sneak in and out and move fast. Minimal casualties for both sides.

But then Bakugou took more than half his team on a rescue and assault mission into the sewers.

Izuku decided that subtlety was not needed.

“Hey, Mei. Go gas up my ride, would you?”

With a rattle of metal fragments and shattered concrete across the bottom of the tunnel, the manhole gave away. With a grunt, Katsuki levered himself down, Sero sliding down behind him and covering the tunnel going back the other way, arms raised and elbows locked and ready for firing tape.

“Check in,” Katsuki barked out, listening to the comms.

“fzzfzzzfzzzfzz” Nothing but static.

“Great. Sero, keep with me. Eyes peeled.”

“Got it.”

They rushed through the tunnels, Katsuki disabling traps with judicious application of his explosions and Sero using his tape to preemptively trigger some so the two could pass.

In the distance, the scream of Kirishima came to them once more.

“BAKUGOU! IS THAT YOU?!”

“SHITTY HAIR!”

Kirishima came into sight, hair soaked and clinging to his face and the windbreaker he had borrowed torn to shreds. Even now the redhead’s Quirk was active and for good reason. His torso and neck were covered in several splashes of red, but the paint was cracked and falling off, and since he was still in the game, it seemed he was still ‘alive.’

Katsuki tensed up at the sight, before relaxing slightly. “Who was it?”

“Tokoyami. He had his Quirk separate me from the rest of the Hammer Squad about ten minutes ago, and we haven’t heard from any of the scouts yet. You?” Kiri scraped paint flakes from his skin as he glanced around for more traps.

“Rescue run. We need to push towards the cistern. Let’s go.” Katsuki turned slowly, then got his bearings and took off at a jog, Kirishima and Sero following along behind him.

Monoma blinked slowly, faking as if he was still disoriented. It wasn't hard. He was in some pain, the deep ache of his arms slowly coming to the forefront of his mind.

But he knew what came next.

He tilted his head, seeing Extortion step slowly past his cell once more, finger deliberately tapping her thigh four times.

Four minutes…

He could feel a smile form on his face.

He pushed it back and relaxed, trying to ignore the dull, throbbing pain. He knew what came next was simple. Extortion would give him her Quirk, he would experience a quick moment of pain, then relief, and then he would take the vial she had in her bag. The one Hitoshi would have handed off overnight while the night crews headed out. Izuku had called it "a wake-up call like none other." A rush of energy, the same formula used in Recovery Girl's gummy candies, but concentrated. It would put him in peak condition and allow him to use Extortion's Quirk without side effects. He and Izuku had checked.

He slowly let his feet and legs flex and tense section by section, stretching long and slow in his seat as he readied to move.

A circle of molten steel dripped from the ceiling as Todoroki burned his way through, followed by a large half-melted manhole cover, before a layer of ice cooled the molten slag down enough for him and Tsunotori Pony to land gently, assisted by her Quirk.

"Asui should have come this way. We're early enough on her route that she can't have been driven too far off course," Todoroki mused, looking around carefully. Pony had her bearings and was already starting to advance, only for a warm hand to grab her shoulder.

A split second later, a wave of ice rushed down the hallway before them, crystals forming in the air and coalescing on a half dozen of thin wires stretched across the tunnel.

"Traps. Be careful." Todoroki murmured before she gulped and nodded, forcing herself to slow down.

Todoroki formed a long, hooked pole of ice and began to gently trigger the traps, several half-frozen balls of paint cracking against the

walls. In fact, Pony could see a large section of the wall was already red under the ice. With a quick moment to search, she pulled a pair of chemical lights from her pocket, both bright pink in color. Snapping them, the tunnel immediately glowed and she caught the edge of Todoroki's smirk in her direction before they strode down the hall. Todoroki continued his efforts at icing and trap-triggering as he raised his left hand and held a small orb of flickering flames to light his way.

The two followed a few twists and turns, finding several more red walls before they came out in a long hallway.

Todoroki sent ice down towards their objective and frowned as he saw no traps. He turned, and brightened his flames, revealing something that made Pony gasp.

Got trapped. Kuroiro. They were ready. Sorry.
-Tsuyu

Todoroki sighed. Pony wasn't sure what was worse: Tsuyu getting mission-killed, or her gruesome message in the blood-like paint. She could even see her partial silhouette against the wall nearby.

Great, things just kept getting worse, didn't they?

"We have to go. They're waiting at the cistern." Todoroki spoke softly to a tense Pony. She gave a shaky nod before they broke into a jog as Todoroki iced their way to the cistern.

Mezou stood on the back of the truck, leaning against the cab. It was yet another hot-wired car from the myriad of junkers that lined the city streets. Yosetsu and Sen sat in the cab, checking guns and counting explosives for the upcoming fight. Next to Mezou, Momo was chewing her way through a pack of pastries and Hitoshi sat against the guardrail across from them, seemingly half-asleep. If not for the fact that Mezou could faintly hear the hectic double-beat of the mind controller's heart, it would have passed by his attention.

All of them were in full armor for this. Suits modified to account for simple armor, from gauntlets and gloves to heavy-duty boots and tactical vests. Hitoshi had pulled back on the faceless Con Man helmet and added a tactical vest instead of his suit vest, leaving the button up suit with the sleeves rolled up. Mezou had the long coat from the museum heist on over a tactical vest and had quite a few guns stashed away for use down the line. Momo had actual pants and boots on, though beneath the rain jacket she wore, she had swapped to a shirt

with a magnetic cross-shaped zipper that would pull apart to let her form larger objects.

Across the alley from them a van stood, its roof melted and corroded away. Inside was the rest of the assault team, prepared for combat. Mina was looking dangerous in her Alien Queen armor, while the cloaked form of Fumikage meditated next to her, relaxing as the gloom empowered his Quirk beyond the norm. The skeletal form of Juzou was outfitted with a sleeveless tactical shirt and armored vest, another shepherd's cane resting across his shoulders. He was chatting softly with Mina.

Another car, a simple 4-door was behind them with Yuga and Shihai, both of whom still wore their now usual suits. Shihai was too reliant on speed in his fights to use the armor, and it would have interfered with Yuga's support gear. Itsuka was sitting in the driver's seat, looking back as she chatted with Reiko, who was still in the creepy school-girl outfit, this time with added horror makeup. Itsuka looked excited. Her arms were bandaged up and bruise cream had been applied. Beyond that, she had swapped to a red and black version of her hero costume. She was getting used to the controls of the car. While not a bad driver, Itsuka was far more at home on a bike than a car, something about reactions to traffic and large hands against airbags.

Finally, the garage door next to them opened, drawing everyone's attention.

Thick red boots that went halfway to the knee with latches and straps holding them tight. Tucked in black cargo pants with a bright red shirt and a deep black leather jacket, broken up only by the brown and black of his harnesses and belt, which held two guns and a myriad of other tools. Under his arm was a black and green bike helmet with glowing green eye decals.

Their leader was smiling with barely restrained exuberance.

Beside him was what had once been a dirt bike, before it was changed to a four-wheeler and given a full Hatsume special. It was a deep black with green accents and touch-ups, the flared base outfitted with large and complex piping. Mezou could only guess what modifications had been made.

"Alright people! It's time for a housecall. Let's start the comms and swap to the right frequency. Then trigger the blackout field." With a

beep all of the comms transferred lines. Then, Ashido and Reiko's work from the first day came into play.

Across the city and around the Hero Agency, dozens of small frequency projectors, hidden in the corners of the sewers and along the streets and alleys, turned on at once. The entire spectrum of radio frequencies and comm lines were now nothing but static, except for the gap of the ultra-high frequency that Izuku and his team were now using.

With that done, Izuku turned to his team.

"Let's get going."

+ + +

In the Hero Agency, Tokage Setsuna heard her comm line plunge into static. She reached into her pocket and pulled out a simple filter mask and put it on. Komori was already trying to contact the base, so Setsuna stepped close to her. Carefully but swiftly, she reached out and pulled Komori tight into a sleeper hold, the younger girl gasping and struggling in the taller girl's grasp. Faintly, she could see spores floating in the air as she struggled.

In less than twenty seconds, Komori went limp.

Setsuna gently let her fall to the ground and turned back to the cell. Neito was already sitting up as she reached into a pocket and pulled out the glowing blue vial. He opened wide and she tilted the vial into his mouth. He swallowed. For a second, nothing happened. Then he shivered and his eyes began to dilate slightly.

"Quirk me," he smiled at her. He looked ever so slightly feral.

She nodded, reached out and tapped his forehead. His left arm had been braced up and tied down to the table at his side, a way to keep him from trying to escape with his injury. Now it simply gave him leverage.

"This is gonna be gruesome," he commented, closing his eyes and breathing deeply.

He reached up and gripped his more damaged left arm with his right hand, feeling the pulsing of his borrowed Quirk and tensing.

He *pulled.*

With a wet splatter, his arm *ripped* away and dropped to hang limply off the table, dripping a stream of red to ground. Beneath the casting and brace, it was already starting to soften and decompose as Setsuna's borrowed Quirk took hold.

"Ah, fuuuuuccckkk that stings," Neito cursed, wincing. Then, the Quirk activated. From the bloody stump, bone and flesh grew and twisted, reaching down and slowly forming his new, unbroken arm.

It took a little under four minutes.

As he gasped for breath and looked down, the slightly pale arm flexing and twisting in his grasp, he held out his other injured arm.

Setsuna tapped him, renewing his grasp of her Quirk, eyes wide and teeth nibbling at her fingertip as she watched.

Neito reached up to his still broken arm with his new limb, and the process was repeated once more.

Five minutes later, Neito stood looking at his hands and arms, fresh with pale skin and no scars or wounds. The only memory of his mutilation was the bloodstained vest he wore. Chuckling at how he was now free, he gave a quick stretch of his new arms.

"Larceny… is back in business." He looked up and grinned, before reaching down and touching the unconscious Komori and pulling a stray hair from her head.

"Let's go, Extortion," he called back, already stepping out of the holding cell.

Setsuna grinned with sharp teeth, and the two villains headed for the stairs.

Tenya sighed and looked over the tunnels. It was clear what had happened here, considering Shouda's comm sat in a puddle with a note saying "imagine a dead body" stuck to the wall.

"Uraraka, let's go. The faster we reach the cistern, the faster we can head back to the base."

"Sure."

“Shit. Come in, Kodai? Console, come in?” Tsuburaba sighed at the dull static that he heard and turned to his security console in the corner office, eyes flickering from the dreary rain-soaked streets to the bright screens.

He tapped through the options and found the hard line connection back to the main security room. A tap and one of the screens turned into a slightly grainy picture of Kodai, typing frantically at her console.

“Kodai, comms are down!”

“Yeah, I got that. Ojiro and Rin are running their patrols and I can’t contact Fukidashi, though the elevator is on its way down so that's probably him. Keep an eye out and the line open, I’ll stay in t–”

Tsuburaba glanced away from the console and looked out the window. He could hear something; a deep bass roar. What the hell was that?

“What is–” Kodai tried to get his attention, but through the heavy rainfall he could see the glow of a vehicle coming his way down the street.

“We got a vehicle coming our way. I can’t see, the rain is blocking my line of sight–”

The rain shifted slightly as the wind changed directions and the glow became clear. A truck speeding towards them in the entrance, a half-destroyed van and a smaller four-door sedan trailing behind it. He could hear the loud roar of the engine from here.

“SHIT COMPANY INBOU–”

That's as far as Tsuburaba got before the window shattered under a tire.

A roaring motorcycle crashed through it, forcing him to brace his arms up across his face to keep the glass from cutting or stabbing at his eyes.

He felt a boot plant in his stomach and his breath left him as the vehicle crashed through the drywall and thin wooden struts that composed the wall of the security post and out into the medical bay beyond.

It skidded to a stop by his downed form, glowing blue-and-yellow jets

flaring across its sides and blowing debris and loose papers away.

Tsuburaba blinked and looked upwards, trying to make out what was going on before he focused on the hand reaching down.

And the gun grasped in said hand.

“Hi, hope you don't mind if we drop in!”

Hiss-snap went the gun, and Tsuburaba gasped as it slammed into his chest, making the deep breath he needed for his Quirk falter.

“You have some things that belong to us!”

3 days before the exam (lunch)

Neito looked down at his hand and wiggled it carefully and experimentally.

“So that worked,” he finally got out, looking at the fresh pale tip of his finger.

“Yep,” Hitoshi said hollowly, a look of faint disgust and a pale pallor casting his features.

“I can use Setsuna’s Quirk,” Neito confirmed.

“If my guess is right, you can use it almost as fast as she does. Arms should take only four minutes, and that's if the speed is by area, not length. Length is only two minutes.”

“You are positive that to test this… I had to chop off the first knuckle of my pinkie?” Neito spoke slowly, looking at the rapidly-decaying hunk of bone and flesh.

“It was the easiest way and Recovery Girl could have fixed that if it went wrong with no repercussions.” Izuku poked the pinky tip with the end of his pencil and gave a soft, satisfied hum.

“What?” Hitoshi asked, seeing the curiosity on Izuku’s face.

“It doesn't require mass quite like Momo’s Quirk, because it reclaims the mass from the decayed parts. This is dead. Dead skin, dead muscle. The blood is gone and most of the still-living cells that should be here… aren't. I would bet they are back in you, Neito.” The pencil poked his hand and Neito slapped it away with a smirk.

Hitoshi, on the other hand, rubbed at his face. “...This is a bit creepy.”

“Yep,” Izuku agreed. “Send her back to lunch, we’ve taken long enough as it is.”

Hitoshi led the brainwashed Setsuna to the door and out into the hall.

As they walked along, Izuku scribbled down some more notes and snapped his book shut. “You good, Neito?” he asked, eyes searching as he watched his teammate closely.

“...Yeah. I’m good.”

“Good. Now, I’m hungry so instead of looking at your piece of finger, I’m gonna go have some food. Lunch ends in ten as it is, so let’s hurry." The three students headed out, dropping the dead flesh in a trash can on the way.

Double Crossings

Chapter Summary

Gambits come to light, and true allegiances are revealed.

Day 2: 10 hours, 33 minutes (10:33 am, local time)

Neito strode through the hallways of the holding cells with a skip in his step. While the… arm renewal process had made him flinch, thanks to Setsuna's Quirk he was right as rain. Having taken her Quirk once more, his arms were reverting back to how they looked before he broke them, skin color fading back in and faint scars appearing once more. Izuku would have nerded out over it. Neito was close to that point himself.

Part of it was the formula; 'Energy Serum' Izuku and Mei had called it. It was like a caffeine high on steroids. The world was vivid, his pulse quick and he felt almost jittery. He was thinking faster or maybe processing faster. His eyes darted from point to point, cataloging his surroundings effortlessly.

Honestly, Izuku had offered to let him sit out the rest of the exam. He could wait and get rescued and be left to enjoy himself in a safe house at the edge of the city. Plenty of entertainment and time to heal up after breaking his arms. Neito had preferred to try out Setsuna's Quirk.

Speaking of! At his side, Setsuna was showing the slightest signs of hesitation, second-guessing her betrayal, but not to the point she would turn back to the hero side. She was too far gone to consider that, which was a shame really.

Idly he followed that train of thought to Hitoshi. Izuku, Neito, and the brainwasher himself had debated if his brainwashing Quirk was limited to commands... or if he could implant *suggestions.*

So far it seemed Izuku was, once again, right on the money.

Neito stopped at the evidence lockup, pulling out his vest and reaching for the buttons on it. He pulled a knife from the utility belt next to it and cut each button free with sharp movements. A few seconds of twisting and disassembly later, his left hand held eight thin rings of plastic (the outer edge of his buttons) wrapped around his fingers. In each, with the ring built around it, was a braided lock of

hair from one of his teammates. As he focused, he could feel the faint bridging connection each one offered. All but Mei and Kouji's rings were responding. Turning back, he reached out to Momo's Quirk and grinned as the tools he needed began to form.

It meant that most of his team must be assaulting the office! Wonderful!

Now that he was armed once more, it was time to see about capturing an objective as his souvenir.

Manga sometimes wished he could talk.

Here and now as he kept throwing up "dings" and "clicks" - he was having a hard time. Three gunmen, Awase, Kaibara, and Shouji, were unloading. He kept throwing up his "effect" shields as fast as they were being taken down.

His Quirk was versatile, the ability to cause various effects based on the words he chose and projected where his head would be. But even now, he was rushing just to raise the continuous string of deflections and blocks against the gun-toting trio before him.

He had headed down to the first floor to get information from Kodai after the communications died and was now stuck in this clusterfuck.

The front half of the reception area was torn to shreds, the large open windows shattered by the cars which drove right in, and the end of the hallway itself had been turned into an all-out firefight. Sections of the walls had melted, the reception bot was driven into the wall, its limbs missing.

Bracing as he saw his chance, Manga swapped from deflecting to attacking.

Big bold letters burst across his face.

'BOOM'

The small pieces of furniture left in the hall blew back, the kinetic shockwave of his Quirk shoving the three gunmen back into the atrium proper, as the word turned into a wave of light and sound.

Manga took a step forward when he heard a sucking sound and turned just in time to see a metallic-looking staff swing down, a crook on the

end catching the back of his ankle and pulling as the wielder, Honenuki Juzou, appeared through a melting wall.

‘ZZZAAAPP.’ Lightning discharged, making the skeleton grin of Honenuki click closed as he dropped the staff, the bright bolts of electricity arcing along the metal and up his arm, making the villain stagger as his legs seized up and spazzed out.

Manga saw a gun barrel pop up from the atrium and felt a series of impacts across his chest.

From his waist, his walkie-talkie beeped.

“Manga. Deceased.”

Shouji nodded, gun spinning around as he and the rest of the villains headed to rejoin the larger battle in the atrium, the shouted orders of Kodai echoing back to Manga as he slumped down.

Izuku tapped the swearing ‘dead hero’ on the forehead and got off his bike, heading towards the stairwell. Behind him, the motorcycle reversed and turned to face back out the window. Skipping slightly, Izuku cleared the steps three at a time, all but bouncing up to the seventh floor and his objective.

He had a memorial to steal from.

Hanging from the ladder leading up to a welded-shut manhole, slow and steady breathing could be heard but not seen. Rats had swarmed Tooru less than an hour ago. Rats and small gophers and raccoons. To escape, she had climbed up the steel bars of the tunnel’s manhole to a height out of their way and triggered a trap aimed at the entrance. The paint had coated the base of the steep ladder, covering her escape.

She heard footsteps slowing to a pause. She tensed, ready to attack anyone who passed by. She heard a deep breath and a slight grunt before–

“Invisible Girl, are you here?” Shishida's soft voice echoed through the tunnel and she perked up.

“Yes, Shishida, are you and the rest of the team here?”

“Just me and Tetsutetsu. Kirishima got separated during an ambush,”

Shishida explained before she heard the click and splat of another trap going off. “We plan to push towards the cistern and hopefully regroup with the rest of our allies there.”

“Understood.”

With smooth grace, she let herself unfold from where she was hooked on the bars and slid down the wall into the tunnel, the soft sound of her bare feet gently padding across the concrete as she joined her teammates.

“Let's go.”

Neito flexed his hand, mouth clamped loosely around several picks as his hands slowly but deftly moved across the lock mechanism, the disentangled wires and electronic keypad pulled away to expose the bare mechanical lock and its actuators.

With a twist, he pulled the pin back more, another pick coming into play to help him keep it jammed open as he fiddled with it.

“So, what’s the plan? Do we disappear into the night? Kill everyone here and vanish? What?”

Neito rolled his eyes, his mouth and hands busy as he gave a non-committed grunt and hum.

‘You’ll find out soon.’ he mused.

Another pick was placed as the lock crept further open.

Across from the door, the deadpan metal caricature of the Class 1-A teacher, Aizawa, sat watching.

“Maybe I can bitch at Blasty, yeah! Talk about how shit his plans are, how outplayed he is...”

Neito used the last pin and could finally speak, as he jimmied the lock one last time. “Maybe. We’ll just have to see, won’t we?”

Setsuna grinned at that.

Neito returned the grin at her innocence… he really hoped she didn’t hold what would be coming soon against him.

He’s just playing by his leader's rules and gambits after all.

Kodai Yui was in deep shit. Ojiro was at her side, a long staff and a makeshift riot shield from the van door serving him well, but the two heroes were far outnumbered. The villains were careful not to let the heroes get a solid hit in, attacking in staggered waves of offense, each one coming in before a response could be mounted or retaliation implemented. The only reason why they hadn't been overrun was the fact that the walls of this room were covered in live electronics Juzou couldn't melt through, and the only real opening was narrow and reinforced.

Yui blocked yet another wave of paint with the shields she expanded from around her arms, wincing at the stinging impact.

"Fuck. We can't hold this," Rin Hiryu called out, sending another series of scales rushing out the doorway from where he was crouched. Already, flecks of paint had splattered across his face and outfit. He had responded by shifting into a more and more lizard-like appearance, sprouting claws and through the rips and tears in his outfit, shifting green scales could be seen.

The security office they were all holed up in opened out into the atrium on one side, and the inner walls of the building on the other. Even with the two inner hallways sealed off, they were still pinned down. The villains had been quick to destroy any security measure they could find, including several turrets.

The door to the atrium, half-closed and guarded by her two companions, was already on its way to being torn apart.

Yui cursed as she started typing in the lockout codes for the console. With luck, it would keep the villains from getting anything they wanted off the system.

As the progress bar began to creep along the screen, Yui smashed the monitor and destroyed the keyboard. The system was automatic from this point onwards, best not to let the villains access it.

With that, she looked up at the sizzling of acid on metal and a curse from Rin, another door along the inner wall beginning to melt under the acid Quirk.

"We're done, we have to go." Yui turned and charged the wall leading out to the alley behind the office.

Ojiro and Rin rushed after her and the three burst through the wall

into the rain. The shouts of villains chased after them as they ran away. They darted down side-alley after side-alley, trying to head for the location of the cistern where the rest of the heroes would be gathering.

Izuku stepped out onto the seventh floor, walking down the hallway towards the display in the center.

There, a statue of a nondescript hero with a ragged cape and a UA sports uniform stood on a pedestal.

There, emblazoned across the back of the cape.

The UA seal.

Izuku grinned.

Neito released his hold on Kaibara's Gyrate Quirk, letting the twisted and crumpled skull of the Aizawa-bot drop to the floor, with a half-chuckle of 'Yorick.' He kicked it back towards the eviscerated body of the bot.

He had taken care to rip the internal workings apart, disabling the recordings of the villain plans, removing the memory core and processor, and ripping the casing open. He had used several quirks to do so, from the acidic touch of Ashido to decay the torso plating, to the touch of Juzou to dig deeper.

With that done, he turned and walked back towards Setsuna, beckoning for her to follow as he headed downstairs. It would be simple to rejoin the villain team and prepare for her… exhibition.

Setsuna, unaware of the future, followed along without complaint.

Katsuki slammed his fist against a steel door and it blew open across the room, revealing the cistern.

And the pile of still-smoking ash and embers resting against the far wall, evidence the villains were long gone.

"They're gone. Fuck," Katsuki sneered, looking across the cistern at the ash and smoke in the air. Kirishima stood beside him.

"BOSS!" There was Tetsutetsu, Shishida and what looked like the

gloves of Hagakure coming down the tunnel behind them.

“Good. You made it. That's Hammer. Where's the rest?”

Over the next ten minutes of waiting, the other two rescue teams trickled in, with a notable lack of either of the other scouts.

“Any sign of the other scouts?”

“Tsuyu got caught in a trap and left a note before she got picked up,” Todoroki reported, posture tense as he stared at the cleared-out villain base.

“Shouda also got taken away. We found evidence he fell into a trap, but no idea how,” Iida confirmed.

“Great,” Katsuki restrained his urge to swear and explode, in this tight space he couldn’t do so without hurting his allies. “Does anyone have comm links still working wit–”

With a crackle of static, his comms came to life. *“Hello, heroes! This is your breaking news update!”*

“DEKU! YOU SON OF A BITCH!” came Katsuki’s growled response. It was so aggressive that the rest of the heroes stepped back and tensed up, hearing the conversation.

“Hiya, Paragon! Figured I should thank you for heading out into the sewers and letting us borrow your place for our party!” That made Katsuki pause in his tracks. His eyes widened as he spun and looked back the way they had come from, in the direction of the Hero Agency.

“What the fuck did you do?” came the tense reply.

“Don’t worry, some of your pals made it out alive. I figure we should have a chat. Face to face, you know? Head back to your base and let’s talk. I mean…”

The chuckle that followed echoed through his mind and set his senses on overdrive.

“You already know about the objectives!”

“DE–,” Katsuki choked on the words as crackling explosions burst around his hands, making his team take another step back out of caution. Though some of them fared barely any better at reigning in their tempers.

“You have twenty minutes. Talk to you then… Katsuki.”

The line went dead.

“...Let’s move. Todoroki, make us an exit,” He tapped over to the general hero comm, now that the lines were clear. “Base squad, check-in.”

Kodai's voice instantly started coming over the line. *“Great, you’re still alive! It went bad. They crashed through the front door in a van and they swarmed us. All of them. Fukidashi got cornered quickly and then I think he got taken out. No clue about the rest, though I think Tsuburaba got taken out early. I never heard from the prison guards.”*

Katsuki sighed as Todoroki used his Quirk to form a tunnel out of the cistern and into the streets above them. “Enough, Kodai. Get whoever you have with you to us. We’re heading back from the cistern now, taking 6th Street. I doubt the villains will still be around, the bastards are far too fond of hit and run. Be fucking alert. Don't want you getting ambushed before we meet up.”

Day 2: 12 hours, 1 minute (12:01 pm, local time)

Izuku loosened his stance, consciously making himself cheerful and relaxed, which wasn't particularly hard. Part of him was... giddy, about this next part. Not out of any sadism or vindictive emotion, but out of pride. After they had rigged up their next performance, leaving behind for the heroes… a few *gifts,* they had taken their leave. The van being left as the villains booked it through the city in the opposite direction of the cistern, circling around until they could enter their Tower once more.

Now, the beeping of his helmet let him know the heroes were once more in their offices.

Stepping up and in front of a red wall adorned with black curtains, he rested himself and stared ahead at the camera that would transmit his message. To the side, just out of frame, Mei was monitoring the feed, and Setsuna stood, now dressed in a simple black-and-white checkered dress, with loose gothic black lace around her shoulders.

The light on the camera clicked on, and he was live. Behind the camera, a Holoscreen came to life. Bakugou and almost his entire remaining team were arranged opposite to his camera, though Komori was missing and Yui and her crew were still looking... unsteady, after

being knocked about by the raid.

“Hiya, Paragon–”

“–it’s such a pleasure to see you again!”

Katsuki narrowed his eyes. The simple camera-and-projector setup was in the ruined atrium, planted in front of a spray-painted matte white wall.

The image of Midoriya was clear and crisp. His form was wearing a green and black helmet, leather jacket, and armored cargo pants. On his helmeted face was an animated form of his jester mask, its expression responding as he talked.

“Cut the shit, Deku. What do you want? Bragging rights? Or are you done with your shit and willing to surrender?” Bakugou sneered at the camera, hoping his contempt got across the line.

“Surrender? Me? Ha, that's funny. I thought you of all people would know by now! I. Do. Not. Give. Up.” The expression on the mask flickered into angry eyes and a flat line for a mouth before the grin returned, *“Besides… I’m not here to talk about us! I’m here to talk about someone who is… just* dying *to talk to you, Kacchan!”*

Midoriya stepped backward slowly, and from off-screen, a figure that Bakugou recognized as one of the Class B kids stepped forwards. One of his Class B kids. The one with the regeneration and dismemberment Quirk.

“She was so kind as to betray you and your entire team, just for the opportunity to brag to you about it,” Midoriya called from his stance against the wall behind Setsuna, who looked at the camera with a vengeful glee.

Katsuki blanked out as the green-haired girl started to talk, all but laughing as she began to speak about what a poor leader he was. It took a moment for him to register what was going on, but when he did–

“Wait,” he called out, breaking her from her rant.

“What, oh fearless ex-leader. You wanna apologize?” she joked, eyes cruel.

“Fuck. No. I just wanna know, how the fuck are you a villain?

Switching sides is against the goddamn rules!" he growled.

"Wait. What do you mean against the–" Tokage blinked and her expression twisted in confusion and surprise. Katsuki suddenly realized that Tokage was half-hiding Izuku from view, and the green laughing expression on his helmet flickered into one of vengeful sadism, traced in deep red.

Click-Hiss-Splat.

3 days before the exam

"–let Shinsou ask you a few questions. You'll blackout for a moment, but don't worry. I'll explain later."

"Okay?" And that was that.

Tokage stared off into the distance, Hitoshi already rubbing his eyes as his Quirk activated.

"Holy shit."

"Yeah. Holy shit," Hitoshi echoed, looking at Tokage with a mix of pity and dumbfounded surprise. Izuku, however, was already pacing and muttering. He looked up, eyeing the clock. Second period, and the free time for him to plan with his team would end in another 40 minutes. He had planned to head over to the Support Classes and check in with Mei, but this was far more important. Lunch was in two hours after that. Setsuna would wake in 10. He had no time.

"How does someone, particularly someone recommended to get *in the top hero school in the country,* not read the fucking RULEBOOK?!" Hitoshi slammed his hands on the table, before looking at Setsuna. "Drink your water. Slowly. Forget what we've said since the start of the trance, and ignore anything we say for the next nine and a half minutes."

Izuku stopped and cupped his hands to his face, breathing long and deep into them. "This... this is a goddamn *goldmine.* Information on enemy team composition, internal updates on their tactics, the ability to gain insider access to computer systems! She is the ultimate ace. An enemy who is on our side."

"And the moment we reveal her, it's over. All it takes is someone letting her know about the fucking rules and we lose that asset. More

importantly, she becomes an asset *against us,"* Hitoshi countered, eyes hard and flinty.

For a moment all was silent, before Izuku widened his eyes.

“Hey, Hitoshi… remember the discussion we had about commands versus suggestions?”

“...You mean the direct control versus subliminal command thing? I thought it was too hard to test–” Hitoshi looked at Tokage, who was quietly sipping her water.

“Well,” Izuku gestured, “Guess we found your test subject. All we need is for her to keep quiet about her betrayal, not read the rules, and keep us informed.”

Hitoshi just sat and looked at her, face neutral but eyes expressive as he considered the situation.

“...I guess we should see what we can do.”

“Not now, we don't have time. We also need to work out the wordings for your commands. We have less than two minutes left. We’ll have her come to us during lunch to see if we can implant suggestions. For now… clean up, fix your hair and get back in your seats. We don’t want her getting suspicious early… and Neito, do you know if you can copy her Quirk?” Izuku rattled off and glanced at the power mimic.

The blond paused and considered, “I want to say yes, but I've never had a reason to test it.”

“Well, that's changed.” Izuku eyed the clock, shifting to stand behind Hitoshi slightly. “Wake her up.”

Hitoshi gave the command and Setsuna blinked, coming out of the trance with a slight jolt.

“Well then.” Izuku grinned over the purple-haired boy's shoulder, smile wide and genuine and filled with joy. “Welcome to the team, Extortion.”

Her smile made him feel guilty about his budding plans for her.

Interlude: The Observers (Part 2)

Chapter Summary

Teachers React to chapters 9-17.

And I'm terribly sorry for the delay on this! A combination of real life and a variety of Writing issues with this chapter have slowed production down a lot. even now, this is only the first half of the teacher reaction, and the second half will be another week almost to finish.

A great thanks to the 'Civil Engineering' crew from my DIscord (I would post all your names but there's like 15 of you and I don't know what names to use. We'll work something out for the footnotes later)

ALSO:
this fic now has a tropes page! WhooO! however, it's not quite up to date. feel free to go fix that if you feel the urge!
(https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Fanfic/HeroClassCivilWarfare)

Now! On to the good stuff.

Day 1: 17 hours, 42 minutes (5:42 pm, local time)

“What do you mean *‘technically,’* Aizawa? It's literally right there in the rulebook! ‘Team composition is final, and intentional violation thereof is an automatic failure!’ I know for a fact that you and Nedzu know those rules. You wrote most of them!” growled out Vlad King. He furrowed his brow and leaned in slightly, pointing at the still bundled-up form of Aizawa. “How did he get Setsuna on his side?”

Aizawa merely smirked as Nedzu stepped in to mediate.

“Kan-san, please relax. The villain team ran their plan by us regarding this, and we have given a tentative go-ahead. If at any time they break that plan, we will remove Tokage from play. For now, we will simply watch.”

Vlad King growled softly before he collapsed into his recliner, grabbing and drinking deeply from a bottle of water.

Power Loader nodded along and then spoke up as he tapped his tablet.

“We may wish to return to the feed. It seems as though the villain team is already doing something.”

They turned to see the screen showing four of the villains - Jirou, Yaoyorozu, Monoma, and Aoyama - entering an elevator.

The doors closed and Midnight pulled up several other screens of cameras placed throughout the location, looking out at the nearly empty building. “Where are the civil-bots? Isn’t there supposed to be a civilian presence in the museum?” she asked, tapping through feeds.

Power Loader frowned at his tablet, checking the recent commands before groaning. “That little hacker. Hatsume sent the closing message early. Attached a fake cover letter too, talking about scheduled renovations and maintenance. The Security-bots won’t leave, but she got all the civilian bots out.”

As the elevator reached the top floor, the screens showed the villains going to work.

Aizawa watched with sharp eyes as Jirou and Aoyama took the lead. Jirou moved in fast and close, ear jacks slamming into computer processors; and through chest plates, the blonde next to her fired lasers in short bursts, mimicking the ear jack damage on the more distant ones.

He had to admit, their coordination was impressive.

All Might had been sitting quietly for a few hours now, mind drifting from the events on the screen to his conversations and observations over the last few days. He had to admit, seeing his successor… seeing Izuku, the young, bright hero-in-training, as a villain?

When it had been announced, he had almost laughed it off.

Oh, he didn't doubt it would be a grand fight, that Izuku would put up a fine resistance and maybe pull out a win…

But he hadn’t thought that Izuku could act like a villain–

–Instill fear like a villain.

He had seen bits of it, but before his successor had blown up a building *just to make a statement,* it hadn’t felt quite real.

Now he could see it, and it was strange. The side of a coin that could

have been… Had it simply been luck that Izuku always landed on the good side, that he never had the right shove to tip to the bad side of the coin?

All Might would never know. He wasn't quite sure what to say or comment, so for now he stayed quiet, watching his successor's plans click and grind away like a great machine of war.

...Maybe his master really would have liked this kid.

He pushed that thought to the side and directed his attention to the screens. The coffin was on its side and the alarms were now blaring. A mistake. How would things be handled now?

If Nedzu had cackled at every twist and turn of sheer ingenuity and chaotic brilliance, he likely would have lost his voice an hour ago.

As it was, he stared with glee at the monitors. The hero team was skilled and individually powerful, no doubt. There were plenty of things he saw done well, and he appreciated the solid teamwork and skills even more. Oh, Bakugou was performing adequately for a strike team leader, but not as a tactician. His gaze was clearly stuck on the next fight, the next conflict. Not the gaps between. Not on the shadow war that Izuku was fighting behind his back.

While most of the screens were muted to keep the noise down, Nedzu had acquired an earpiece that was tuned to both the hero and the villain frequencies. It was… *glorious* to listen to them as they responded to the conflict in the museum.

Izuku himself was in constant contact with the four man team, as well as with Hatsume Mei. On his tablet, Nedzu paged through the console commands to select a drone camera. A few taps later and it hovered far above the city. Its mechanical eye zoomed into the concealed black-and-pink form of Miss Hatsume. She leveled a rifle from her perch at the heroes, just as they rushed the building. Over the comms, Nedzu could hear her as she relayed what she could see through the windows of the office building under the museum, and what she could tell of the people already in it.

Midoriya and his team were already in the building while the 'acquisitions team,' as it was called, had already begun to fortify and secure their location. Nedzu munched on a small pawful of cashews as he shifted his perspective. He pulled a slightly more cinematic view of where he expected the conflicts to occur over to the wall of monitors.

At the top of the tower, on the 13th floor, the villains had barricaded themselves in and readied for war, leaving some interesting traps behind.

From the ground floor up, a number of heroes had breached the building, spreading through the complex in a quick and efficient search pattern.

In the sewers, the Kingpin and his hands stepped into the basement and began to take control of the building in their own way.

Nedzu had been offered a chance to read through the 'Stage Directions,' as Midoriya had called it, but had refused. Aizawa had read it, and would have reported anything too… risky, so to speak. Though, judging from what Midoriya had let loose upon the hero teams, he strongly suspected that there was a bit of resentment left from Aizawa losing as the villain leader in his second year.

Regardless, Nedzu watched with interest when the elevator dropped off the leader of the villains and his companions, only a floor above the lower group of heroes, the three rapidly setting up a scene.

(Later on, Nedzu would happily admit he almost choked when the two durability Quirk students went running out the windows.)

Day 1: 19 hours, 12 minutes (7:12 pm, local time)

"-Go dive out the windows."

Aizawa almost facepalmed and made a mental note to work on tactical thinking and engaging the enemy with Kirishima. He should see about dragging Tetsutetsu into it.

Yes, Shinsou was an unexpected variable.

Yes, Shinsou's Quirk was devious and cunning and hard to counter…

But for the love of all that is holy, why did they let him monologue?

The fight between Bondo and Shouji was over quickly, the bucket on his head an inspired and simple solution to the Cemedine Quirk, with the added bonus of making the giant combatant blind.

Shouji's swift and efficient takedown was also executed fairly well, though he did make a note to help the six-armed teen learn some better grapple techniques. With the sheer range of grip he possessed, it

was being criminally underutilized. Izuku then proceeded to finish off the large student.

“Confirm kill?”

“Confirm. Grab him and maybe one more. You know the drill, Ecto,” Nedzu confirmed over the teacher radio. Ectoplasm looked up and nodded before going back to his book in the far corner, his clones moving in to quickly grab and pull out the downed student.

However, as they got in the elevator, Aizawa was grinning.

Midnight was a fairly simple woman, in her own not-so-modest opinion. She knew what she liked, was good at what she did, and knew how to have fun. She had long since learned plenty of techniques and ways to change her appearance for the better, to separate the appearance of ‘18+ Only Hero: Midnight’ and ‘Kayama Nemuri.’

As such, she was intimately familiar with the skill that Midoriya and Shinsou had just pulled off.

Costume changes.

It was sloppy from her perspective, slightly rushed and over-compensated by body language. Their little face swap would fail the moment– wait.

Shit. That's actually really smart.

She watched and listened as Shinsou, the brainwasher, got Bakugou to respond and immediately got him out of the fight. Her evaluation of the conflict (firmly in the heroes’ favor) suddenly shifted. In one move, the leader of the heroes had been removed from play. The numbers had swapped from all but even, into almost two to one odds.

“Solid plan,” Kan grumbled, eyes stuck to the screen, “But that only works once.”

“That acquisition team’s marksmanship is shoddy. However, the shotgun blast from Shouji was well executed. Far enough for spread, close enough for impact,” Snipe commented, leaning back in his couch. “Ecto, you need to grab Kaminari as well, it seems. The young fool would be dead from a shot like that.”

Ectoplasm nodded and two more clones outside the city headed in to recover the ‘bodies.’

The rest of the room quieted, leaning forward in anticipation as a race to the basement began.

The elevator pinged, the villains filling out. The last one out was Midoriya, who glanced up at the camera in the elevator and smiled, winking.

Day 1: 19 hours, 22 minutes (7:22 pm, local time)

All Might spoke up as the fight in the basement between the Kingpin and the Paragon began.

“Young Midoriya is holding back. I believe that is only half of his current potential limit. Perhaps he’s saving strength?”

“Yeah, but look at this setup. In less than ten seconds, he slanted that fight,” Power Loader commented before drinking from his water bottle, eyes on the ongoing battle. “If he wanted to take out Bakugou, he could. Right here and now.”

“Up the volume, Mic. We should hear this,” Aizawa murmured.

“Sure thing, Shouta!”

“–I’ve always believed. I know that you are obsessed with being ‘Number One.’ I know you think that heroism is a competition, that being the best means something. Being Number One? It never mattered in the same way to me. I appreciate the title, the meaning behind the words. There are heroes and there are villains. That's the fight you should worry about. Number One? It's a joke. A public opinion piece ran by gossip magazines that worry more about sales than merit. I’d rather be a ‘Symbol of Peace.’”

For a moment the room was silent, the Pro Heroes struck by the sheer presence that Midoriya seemed to invoke through his words. The level of violence on-screen contrasted even more with how he normally acted.

“Problem child has a point,” Aizawa stood from his position, sleeping bag falling to the ground behind him as he walked up to the wall of screens. “We’ve all seen how this works. And I think this means we have a responsibility here.”

Aizawa turned and All Might nodded, his arms crossed in front of his thin form as he bowed his head. “Young Bakugou needs to realize that the world is not a conflict that can be won through violence. Fighting is a skill to have, yes, but his mindset is flawed.”

Aizawa grimaced, but agreed, looking back just in time to see Bakugou get tossed into the second wave of heroes.

“Hold up, look at this,” Vlad King said, pointing.

Monoma and Shinsou moved across another screen. Monoma brought a hand to his mouth and swallowed as Shinsou slapped his back, and the blond rushed out of the doorway. Monoma sprinted down the hallway and slid to a stop, his hand grabbing the side of Izuku’s collar as he turned.

“Excuse me, Boss! Sorry about this, but your taxi is waiting and you are far too important to lose here,” And as Izuku tried to protest, he went flying. Shinsou only barely braced himself to catch his leader before he kicked the door shut behind them.

“Well. I still have an arm, so let's see if I can copy my boss, yeah? Two for two?”

Monoma then proceeded to throw a punch. The feeds across a dozen screens went dark, vanishing in the aftermath. Power Loader started scrambling and the rest of the teachers exclaimed questions about what happened. Aizawa grinned wide, face hidden by his position, right in front of the screens.

“Ha. It's a logical ruse,” he whispered softly, eyes lighting up as the pieces clicked. He barely held back a laugh. He had heard about the ‘Larceny’ gambit, but knowing exactly how well the heroes had been set up…

Finally, a new camera feed, clearly taken from a window across the street and zoomed in, showed Monoma, arms broken and bruised, laughing up at the heroes that surrounded him.

“My god. He sacrificed himself for a member of Class A. What the hell?” Aizawa started chuckling, unable to stop himself at Vlad King’s incredulous comment.

‘If only Kan knew exactly what was going on…’

Day 1: 23 hours, 44 minutes (11:44 pm, local time)

Honestly, after that climactic showdown in the basement and its 'explosive' finale, the waiting was hell.

Almost four hours of nothing. The heroes had gone out on patrol and the cameras in the villain base showed them simply performing maintenance, eating dinner and setting up some minor traps.

Yamada Hizashi yawned loudly before glancing around. Shouta was dozing in his corner, once more wrapped up tight in his sleeping bag. Kan sat with his eyes closed, seemingly dozing in his recliner. All Might was leaning against the wall, and Hizashi would have thought he was napping if not for the occasional cough and shift.

Midnight had resorted to fiddling with her phone, the faint repetitive music of some button tapping game drifting from where she lay half-sprawled across a couch. Snipe had moved from his seat next to her to sitting at a table and cleaning his revolvers since almost an hour ago. Nedzu sat the same as ever, grinning, waiting, watching, teacup in hand.

Power Loader was actually being productive for the past few hours, tablet filled with the designs and modifications Hatsume had made. He looked over and reviewed the blueprints and work notes of what she had done. With Hatsume Mei actually being included in the exercise, he had marked it all as extra credit and was planning to let her use it as part of her required lab hours. Not that she needed them.

Aside from that, Power Loader also had another dozen-or-so Support students to review and watch over. He rarely had as much free time as the Hero class teachers, but also didn't take as many patrols or combat missions during the evenings and weekends.

Hizashi was so *bored.*

A beep drew his and Power Loader's attention to the screen. There, holding up an index card and tapping on the camera, was Midoriya.

The card read, 'Night Phase Starts Now.'

"SHIT! PEOPLE, THINGS ARE HAPPENI–" Mic started, waking up the rest of the room as his voice rose, before the familiar cut-off of Eraserhead's Quirk took hold.

"We got it, Hizashi. Calm down."

Mic raised his hands in surrender and felt his voice come back. Now calm, he pointed at the screen where Izuku had flipped the card around.

‘Heading to bed. Enjoy the show!’

With that, the green-haired teen waved and meandered through a door off-screen.

“Power Loader, give me a headcount,” Nedzu directed, his small seat and counter rising up to a normal person's head level, as he glanced across the bank of screens.

“Three teams of three heroes each on patrol, another two on guard duty. The rest are either running comms or in the infirmary. Villains… are far more scattered. I count four teams of two in the sewers, another two on comms. The rest are sleeping and healing.” Power Loader counted off.

“…You said that two are on comms, but where is Shinsou going?” Nedzu’s sharp ears caught the discrepancy.

“Hold on… tracking the signal–” A screen near the center of the array flickered through several cameras until it showed Shinsou, looking up a sewer grate in the half-illuminated footage, with a duffle bag in hand.

“What the hell. Where is he?” Vlad King muttered, his own tablet coming up.

“He’s near the bank ruins, less than half a block from the collapse.”

“What is he–”

On the screen, Shinsou found a ladder and began to climb. Power Loader tracked him as the other screens followed the signals of the earpieces and watched the other four teams of two move into position.

Shinsou came on screen again at a small garage door in a back alley, with an open manhole right behind him. Leaning in, he fiddled with the lock and then lifted the door, revealing a garage filled with workbenches. On them was a pair of very large suitcases, each marked with the villains’ ‘V’ insignia.

“Shit. What are those? Where did those come from?” Hizashi wondered aloud, looking at the room for answers.

Power Loader was already on it, running the footage back on his tablet.

“They dropped them off before the bank thing. It’s one of the cameras we didn’t let the heroes use. The truck moved through the alley and stopped for a minute. All of them were taking back alleys around that time so I don’t think we noticed.”

Shinsou grabbed the suitcases and carried them out, lowering them into the sewers before closing the garage door. He dropped in after them, leaving the manhole cover half-open.

“Wait, the rest of the teams are moving.”

Across the screens, a map appeared in the upper left with the positions of the remaining 10 objectives and the currently active students marked.

“Four objectives at once. Ambitious much?”

“In all actuality Kayama, it’s quite ingenious. Divide and conquer, you could say. By attacking so many locations simultaneously they can disrupt the heroes’ patterns and allow themselves time to sow confusion in their ranks–”

“No… only two of the teams are getting attention! Look, the jewelry store and the radio station–”

Hizashi paused in his sentence as he felt his jaw drop, the screen finally showing the objective of young Awase and Kaibara.

A fake Present Mic.

A *very shitty* fake Present Mic.

“What the SHIT?!”

Day 2: 0 hours, 2 minutes (12:02 am, local time)

Kan Sekijirou, also known as Vlad King, facepalmed as he looked up at a camera feed overlooking the park.

Ashido Mina and Yanagi Reiko had been stealthy. The feeds from inside the building showed the twisted, nearly Salvador Dali-esque effect of Honenuki Juzou’s Quirk on an environment. The gravity girl, Uraraka Ochako, from 1-A, had demonstrated some solid combat

skills. But it was what he had mentally begun referring to the Devil Duo that was giving him ulcers.

Firebombs. Guns. Ruthless opportunistic murder of every hero they seemed to run across, reckless and insane driving stunts… God, they were gonna be the death of him. Oh, part of him was proud. The two boys had demonstrated tremendous skill and capability in urban warfare. They had possibly the highest combined kill count amongst the villains, something he'd never would have guessed from their joking behavior in class. But by god, the sheer variety of nerve-wracking crazed stunts was going to drive him to drink.

Beyond that, Shiozaki really needed to stop overextending herself.

Sekijirou had winced when Kaibara once more took the fight up close and held Satou hostage, distracting the heroes from his partner. Now, Shiozaki's attention was diverted by the burning of her vines (which Kan knew she could feel. She had described it as "resembling a particularly bad itch.") and *turned away from the villain.*

Fuck it, that's it. They are going to be running situational awareness courses for weeks.

Day 2: 0 hours, 21 minutes (12:21 am, local time)

Kayama Nemuri, aka Midnight, leaned back and stared as the glacier formed across the street below Todoroki, prompting a standoff between the fire/ice user and the four villains who eyed him from the truck they had stolen.

"Pride's about to bite him in the ass," Mic called out from where he now lay upside down against the cushion, his hair loose and undone as he watched the screens.

"Agreed," Nemuri responded, sipping a cup of coffee, her second one so far.

Two seconds later the entire glacier broke and shattered, Tokoyami blasting a way through and allowing the villains to drive through the chaos and make their escape.

On another set of screens, the camera feeds died out. The few cameras left showed half a building slowly sagging and collapsing into its neighbor. Vlad King looked on with mild horror, and Ectoplasm chuckled, "Looks like your kids are finding some new tricks."

“Christ. When did they come up with this shit?” Vlad King groaned even more as other feeds popped up, showing the two reunited villains teams heading for the sewers.

Nemuri looked back at the other confrontation as several screens flicker and distort from a flash of bright light, before showing a dazed and nearly blind Todoroki crouched behind a half-dome of ice.

If there was anything positive she can say about Endeavor’s teachings, it was that Todoroki Shouto knows how to react under pressure.

On the screens, the truck took a sharp turn and began to circle the outside of the map, before driving down into one of several underground parking lots throughout the city, just like they did with the gun-truck.

Looking over the results of the first day of the exercise, Nemuri couldn’t help but be disappointed with the hero team's performance. Six casualties, nine stolen objectives, all in less than twenty-four hours. It wasn’t just that they were being outmaneuvered, it was that there was no team cohesion, no camaraderie. When they weren't fighting or doing stuff, the team fragmented, each member talking to maybe one other, or with their friends.

She mentally compared it to the scenes from the villains. Them eating and chatting together, talking together, working in smooth tandem in teams of two. It was simple and rather ingenious. Instead of trying to make every villain trust every other villain, Midoriya had sidestepped that issue by limiting the size of the teams and who had to be relied upon and trusted.

According to the reports from Nedzu, the heroes had spent most of the last week focusing on sparring and some basic tactics, but nothing about trust or teamwork.

The villains had spent hours together, and from Nedzu’s spyware in the UA servers, had been using a chat room to stay in near-constant contact for almost five days.

Her musings on teamwork were broken as she looked up to see Ectoplasm and Snipe chuckling.

On one of the screens, the General Education student, Shinsou Hitoshi, held up a piece of paper to a camera.

‘Intermission. Back at 7 AM for next event. Sleep well!’

Well. That was polite, she supposed. Several seconds later he vanished, presumably to take his own advice.

“So we’ll sleep in shifts for the night?” Mic asked, looking at the room.

At the nods of agreement, they began to hash out a rough sleep schedule.

Kaminari blinked awake and groaned. His entire left side felt like it was burning, and he could feel the painful ache that he knew belonged to a deep tissue bruise.

He remembered what happened. Getting shot and hearing Ectoplasm tell him he was out of the game had been disheartening. Even more so when he arrived at the teachers’ watching facility to find the mopey-looking Big Glue Guy (Bonda? Blondie? Something like that) along with Mineta, who was sitting against the wall, passed out and encased in concrete up to his knees. He could only guess that Mineta had tried to say or do something to the Glue Guy and gotten knocked out for his troubles.

He had taken a nap just over an hour after. While they could follow the camera feeds, they were on a 30-minute delay, presumably so they could review what had happened to themselves. He had waited so he could rewatch the museum fights, and had been alternately amused, horrified, and *in awe* of what went down.

Did they ever really stand a chance?

Even now, hours later, he felt... discouraged.

He wandered out from the room of bunk beds, seeing Mineta passed out on the far side of the barracks, and that Big Glue Guy sitting on a couch with a phone in hand.

He wandered to a television nearby and turned it on. It was like, midnight now, so he wasn’t expec–

Holy shit.

For almost an hour, Kaminari froze, unable to take his eyes off the screen. He pulled up the tablet controlling the playback and filtered through video feeds and fights.

The park was set on fire, three members of the heroes were dead,

another building got half-destroyed, and Todoroki got outplayed.

That was only what he could *see*.

As a hero, he still couldn't see what the villains were doing before the hero team interacted with them. He also couldn't see out of range of the 'public' camera feeds. And from what interactions he could see? The villain team was *outright terrifying*. Gunshots that left red splatters covered several streets and heroes, a park had gone down in flames to weaken a Quirk, Todoroki and his expression of pure dumbfounded surprise when his glacier was outright obliterated by Dark Shadow…

It was… surreal.

As the final set of feeds played out, he realized that he was no longer alone. The 1-B kid with the Mantis Quirk, Kamakiri, was leaning against the wall next to the door, but before Kaminari could say anything, he turned and left.

Sitting there, Kaminari wondered exactly when everything went to shit.

(He had a feeling it was the split second when Midoriya had been chosen as the Kingpin.)

Interlude: The Observers (Part 3)

Chapter Summary

> Kan needs a drink, Mic is not feeling good,
> And goddamn it who the fuck approved this shit.

Day 2: 6 hours, 7 minutes (6:07 am, local time)

Aizawa stifled a groan as he stretched, sleeping bag half wrapped around him even as he stood and fiddled with the coffee machine. Around the room, the other teachers were dozing and resting, and on the screens only a few students were awake. There were the night guards for the hero base, and Bakugou walking around, preparing for the day.

On the villain side of things, most of them were resting, the cameras linked to their rooms shut off for privacy, while in the more open areas of their base only a few were present. Shinsou sat in the general kitchen area, going through his morning ritual and fiddling with his own coffee, while Midoriya was wandering around his 'trophy room,' adjusting plans and scrawling information on the walls to sort and organize thoughts.

His fairly self-absorbed rambling and muttering habit was… weird, but harmless. But it was, in all honesty, frightening to see it change into this sprawling madman-style expansion and scrawl of ideas. It took what Aizawa and many others had thought to be a mild habit and mutated it to some form of 'Prophet of the Damned' mad aesthetic.

Nedzu had already mentioned shifting and refining it to a far more self-contained format to make it more organized. Which implied that Nedzu wanted to tutor Midoriya. Which was… a frightening and yet all too interesting concept. Seeing Midoriya's massive potential being refined at the paws of the Principal would be interesting, especially when contrasted with All Might's seemingly reckless and naïve influence. Already Midoriya had heart, charisma, strength and intelligence, but it needed tempering.

This exercise was the first big step in that direction.

All Might kept close attention to the two teams going forth from the

hero bases, cameras following their progress through the sewers. He was surprised that young Midoriya was staying back at this point. His own Civil War experiences had all been either finished in a single day or in the mists of heavy, prolonged conflict. Either sieges or open warfare in the streets. Seeing such a… slow war, was surprising. Oh, there was action, but it wasn't the hectic battle of panic and rage that usually appeared during such events.

No... this reminded him of some of the more dangerous villains in the world, particularly the ones he went up against when he was first starting out, before he had decided to permanently focus his efforts in Japan. Courtesan and their underground network in San Diego, or Heretic's 'counter church culture' in Utah, Katana and his cult of madmen in Inaba… *All For One and his organizations.*

All of them had been nightmares to face. From Katana's extremely skilled '7 Ronin,' each matching multiple heroes simultaneously in open combat, to the hell that was Heretic's '11th Plague' that turned several cities into apocalyptic wastelands of brainwashed maniacs.

It wasn't scale, but potency that made a villain. It was the issue that smaller and newer organizations, like the League of Villains, had. Plenty of villains joined in, ready to fight and prove themselves, but they were fairly weak individually and unable to fuse their strengths together.

Midoriya seemed to excel in negating such a weakness. Oh, there were still rough edges, timing being off between groups, skills not quite mastered being used hesitantly. But they made up for it with versatility. A team goes wrong? Send another to fix it. And where it mattered, where the teamwork *clicked* for the villains, it was inspiring. Young Kaibara and Awase were perfectly in-step with each other, and trusted each other with surprising depth. Monoma and Yaoyorozu were skilled and the copycat had picked up on the use of Creation with astonishing speed, even if perhaps without the same… delicate touch that Yaoyorozu employed.

And the skill and power of young Midoriya's core team. Him, Shinsou, Shouji, and Hatsume, together they were astonishing. Shouji Mezou was a powerhouse in his own right, but the force multipliers together with his ability to adjust physically to the gear made for him by Hatsume Mei, created a monster on the field. And that was discounting the surprisingly deep bond of… perhaps brotherhood, that Shinsou and Midoriya shared. Some of the conversations that All Might could hear over the speakers from the villain base spoke of deep

consideration between the four villains. From Hatsume's enthusiastic and wild ideas to Shouji's calm and methodical opinions, Shinsou chiming in with hesitancy and caution, and the Kingpin's own systematic reactions and counters.

It was fascinating, and mildly disturbing.

But now he would see how well the 'lieutenants' did without Midoriya on the scene.

'Show us how... Plus Ultra you can all be.'

Day 2: 8 hours, 32 minutes (8:32 am, local time)

'About time they put it together.'

Kan nodded, looking at the screen focused on the hero team's actions, waiting for them to respond to the villains.

While the teams of villains advanced past security checkpoints with only the most superficial of hindrances, the heroes finally used their skulls for something more than brute force. Todoroki had apparently not been a fool and paid attention, finally putting together the pieces on what exactly the villains were after.

"They are missing several files," Nedzu commented, looking at the documents they could see Todoroki pulling up and sorting through.

"The server bank file is missing… same with the shipment manifest for the warehouse, and the lab report. All of which should have shown up in this search."

"Look at the editing logs; they were edited less than a day ago. I guess the villains breached the system before now… though when they did is still up in the air, dammit," Power Loader trailed off as he began to try and match up logs of when the system was changed, just as his console started beeping.

"What the h– oh that little genius," he groaned.

"What did Hatsume do now?" Midnight leaned over Power Loader's shoulder, trying to see what was going on.

"She put in a virus. And I can't even get mad at her because it's a reaction command. To Shinsou. Essentially it's a digital version of his Quirk tuned to his voice," Power Loader grumbled. *"And* it's not

against my regulations because it's to enhance the realism of the event. It should get wiped out with the next system reset, but that's… five hours away."

"And that's not all that's going on. Shouji's and Hatsume's group has blitzed through the research facility, and is already in the storage room. They had a fairly smart reaction to a secured door too. They went through the far weaker and unalarmed wall next to it," Aizawa called, eyes flickering between three screens tracking the progress of the villains and Todoroki's research efforts.

"Huh. Mei did listen to my lecture about building integrity," Power Loader muttered to himself.

Aizawa looked at the screen following the two teams of six heroes each. One team was going into the sewers, the other…

"Who authorized the bot designs?" he turned slowly to look at the rest of the teachers. "I just want to talk."

Nedzu smiled. "Why, I did. I thought that giving the students a personal stake in the designs of their objectives would provide some additional motivation!"

Aizawa stared helplessly at his madman of a boss, before sighing and turning back to the screens. "At least I'm not as bad as that… *monstrosity* based off All Might."

In the back of the room, All Might was face down at a table and was strongly tempted to find some alcohol, despite the state his stomach was in. He wasn't that god-awful cheesy… *right?*

"The sewers are a goddamn deathtrap, and Paragon there isn't paying attention," Snipe commented, having long since finished any maintenance on his gear and sitting down on the largest of the couches. He had with him a six-pack of sarsaparilla and a box of licorice. The whiskey and tequila were back in his office. And, depending on how exactly this ended, he was betting he would share with some of the other teachers. They needed it. "He's too focused on trying to find the villains. I spot a case of hyperfocus, and not in a good way."

Mic nodded, pacing as he watched over the feeds. "The team for that vial is already done with the puzzle and heading back. But–"

“The office security includes a reset for the bots on the top level. And that's going to be a test of skill to escape the trap set up there,” Power Loader interrupted, a simple layout of the hallway appearing. “We have two cameras, an RG turret, and three securi-bots set up beyond the checkpoint as security.”

Nedzu smiled as he listened into the young man directing his squad. “I think we may be pleasantly surprised.”

On the screen there was a hectic clash of movement, and within seconds the bots were disabled and the security destroyed. A kick sent the Might-bot’s head to the side as its body was leaned against the now sealed door. With a flicker of light that washed out the camera, the bot and the door were both ripped apart by Aoyama’s laser. Yaoyorozu and Jirou darted through the gap, Shinsou sliding off his jacket and following, leaving the cloth on the wrecked remains of another even as he drew a pair of handguns from his back.

“...They just blew up the All Might Bot.”

All Might sighed in a weird mix of relief at the destruction of such a monstrosity, and... discomfort that they so easily destroyed a robot of himself. He then coughed up blood, and got annoyed that he had sighed.

In the meantime, the villain team tore through the upper office, Jirou cracking the safe and the team preparing for a quick departure, readying a zipline to exit through the window.

“Quiet entry, decisive action, clean exit… That Shinsou kid isn't half bad at tactical thinking. But his skills for combat need lots of work,” Kan murmured.

Aizawa gave a distracted nod, fingers already moving across his tablet as he looked into something.

The heroes paid attention to the monitor banks, a map of the sewers pulled up with the locations of the heroes and villains marked on it. Those two groups were playing a massive game of cat and mouse, currently being displayed on a center screen. From what they could tell, most cameras in the center of the city, at least at and below street level, were nothing but static. The only ones Power Loader could isolate were the ones for the villains, who were regrouping, and the frequencies of the teachers’ network for cameras and safety.

“Young Bakugou is too textbook for this kind of battle. While his tactics are adequate, he does not seem to have a grasp of longer term strategy,” All Might observed, the gaunt hero watching the scouts slowly move through the dark, confined sewers. The major problem in the strategy was three-fold. One issue was that Bakugou was not prepared for a grinding war of attrition; this fault was not entirely his own, as UA did not concentrate on drawn-out encounters due to the limited hours of class time. The students were expected to acquire such skills on internships.

A second issue was with how the team treated each other. From what All Might saw in the camera feeds, Katsuki showed a disturbing lack of critical thinking when approaching comrades and leading. As a follower, he could act insolent and brash; and as a leader, Katsuki needed to show himself as an example, and didn’t.

“Perhaps,” All Might suggested, “A leadership course on different roles within a strategic framework is needed. Young Bakugou performed quite well as a boot camp instructor for combat, but could not change tactics for the event itself... Snipe, I know you occasionally act as a strike team leader for assault actions. Would you be able to teach a few extra classes with Bakugou and some of the others?”

“I doubt there will be an issue with something like that,” Snipe agreed. The gunslinger nodded thoughtfully before continuing, “From what I have seen, Paragon is not suited at the moment for the long strategic thinking that Kingpin is showing. Speaking of, if anyone should be teaching that kid, it should be Aizawa or Nedzu. Ain’t many others more suited to direct that mind of his.”

Nedzu nodded, “I can think of a few, but I agree, perhaps we should offer it as an optional class on Tactical Thinking and Urban Warfare.” The principal looked momentarily pensive, before brightening with a toothy smile. “And besides, looking at our cunning villains, we might be seeing the early stages of a hero agency, here.”

Vlad King groaned at the thought of the Devil Duo from his class going out and running missions with a license. Both had proven themselves shameless combat opportunists, pranksters, and far too willing to use violence and lies to get into position. Really, he was going to drink so much alcohol at home to try and blank out Nedzu’s delighted comments on the villains in his class.

All Might, on the other hand, considered his third point, which was an oversight on the teachers’ part. The true difference between the two

teams was of management. Izuku had picked up management techniques and methods that seemed to work for him with ease. He had avoided micromanaging the villain team, and it was a possibility that his exposure and command of his team was not limited to just heroics, but philosophy as well. Katsuki's team was all too streamlined for combat and fighting, the hero team also seemed to be reticent to give advice or information. If they had, they could likely have taken some measure of initiative far earlier, sharing the few fragments of the villain team's data they had before Todoroki figured it himself. While All Might recognized the faults of Katsuki's leadership, another issue was the lack of individual leadership and communication among the rest of the heroes' side.

On the screens that showed the sewers, more traps were obvious, clear indications that the correct move would be to regroup and reorganize. But the heroes refused to heed the signs. And on some of the screens, the menacing figures of Tokoyami, Kuroiro, and (much to his surprise) young Kouda were all preparing to meet the heroes in their domain - traps and blockades slowly leading all the teams towards specific choke points.

All Might had high expectations for all his students, from both classes and on both teams.

So far the heroes had not measured up.

The villains had exceeded his expectations.

Day 2: 10 hours, 13 minutes (10:13 am, local time)

The audio crackled, the words of the villains coming over the comms even as the heroes began to panic, reacting to the newly realized threat that was the sewers team's actions. With them cut off, it was easy for the villains to goad them into trying to emulate the villain's 'rescue performance' from the day before.

And with the heavy hitters out and on the move, the cameras showed Setsuna getting a text from the Kingpin.

"Looks like Setsuna was finally activated," said Vlad. "I still don't get how they got her onto the team."

"Only Nedzu and Aizawa know," said Snipe, a scowl under his mask.

"I actually only have a guess. I refused to read into the plans for the

exam. I do so enjoy seeing things unfold that I don't know about!" Nedzu commented, leaning in. "I let Aizawa do most of the final checks and clearances. I only know about some of the failed plans, and only due to Izuku offering them to me for consideration after they were vetoed."

"Well, the only firm issue for the villains' grades for now is Monoma's injury," All Might said with slight remembrance at young Midoriya's many broken limbs. "With his arms both broken together with his detainment, that makes it the main negative in the villain team's scoring."

"He was on a drug earlier from what the Kingpin said. Is that ok?" asked Midnight.

"It's a generic formula that Recovery Girl and I have developed. It's for immense pain, but causes minor confusion. It has few side effects and is near impossible to overdose on as well, making it quite useful for more… aggressive patients. Aizawa checked it with me a few days ago, and the formula can be found quite easily in the support computers. It's only a stimulant with an exhaustion repercussion afterward." Nedzu replied. "Beyond that... there was another formula requested, a mild stimulant and energy booster, akin to an adrenal shot. And it seems it's being used right now!"

On the screen, Setsuna stepped past an unconscious Komori, and pulled out the vial. Monoma grinned and nodded at her, and opened wide, the gleaming blue liquid rushing down his throat. Setsuna also placed her hand on his shoulder. With a quick smile, Monoma closed his eyes and began to tense.

"Hey, what's he–" Mic was cut off by the faint sound of flesh being ripped.

Sadly, as a long-range fighter with a Quirk that usually only had a mild external injury in application, and with his own natural squeamishness… he lost his lunch. The rest of the heroes ignored the retching from the corner into the garbage as they watched in awe and horrified fascination as first one, then the other of Monoma's arms were regrown using Setsuna's Quirk.

"What. The. *Fuck!"* Vlad King exclaimed, "This is that problem child's fault!"

Aizawa waved it away, it *was* probably Kingpin's influence, "We'll just have Izuku give Recovery Girl some chocolates after this. She likes

those high-quality dark chocolates with cream filling, right?"

All Might looked at the screen with trepidation, he'd make sure to slip his protégé some money; those chocolates were expensive.

Monoma stood, a wild smile on his face, covered in his own blood but triumphant in the end. He walked away from the cell, leaving two torn chunks of bloody flesh behind for the heroes to find.

"Well… THAT happened!" Snipe shouted, throwing his hand out before shifting his mask to rub at his eyes in stress and confusion. It did explain why Monoma did not let Recovery Girl treat him; the villains sure were on top of their game. It reminded him of an Escher painting with cogs within cogs turning. This is why he was a strike team leader, he just wanted to shoot things not figure out these kind of layered plans.

Of all the heroes present, Snipe could sympathize with Paragon the most. Nedzu, on the other hand, was eyeing Aizawa's growing smirk with budding amusement. The bear-mouse caught glimpses of Aizawa's grin that indicated even more would be happening soon. Excellent!

The principal could appreciate a script, *written in advance,* that continued to be followed. The old adage 'no plan survives contact with the enemy' did not apply here.

"Should we… should we get these kids some therapy after this?" Midnight looked at the rest of the heroes, seeing fairly uniform green and pale faces.

All Might was contemplating how Recovery Girl would react; he knew she'd blame him. Present Mic looked pale at the thought of these crazy kids taking classes with him - who knows what they would do? The voice hero made a promise to not include any body parts in future lessons. Vlad King was the worst off, because he had these kids back after this and they'd all changed; what he didn't know was that worse was to come.

"I already got Hound Dog to cover it," Aizawa replied. A smirk of satisfaction poking through his squeamishness at the thought of the counselor lapsing into barks and growls threaded through his consciousness. Either Hound Dog would help them or traumatize them further; Aizawa was fine with both, really.

"Make sure to set a visit for Mic too." All Might leaned in and

muttered to Aizawa. “Even if it's not official.”

Aizawa nodded and looked back at the screens as the sounds of heaving stopped.

“I’m back,” Mic said with less enthusiasm than usual. “Did I miss anything?”

“Monoma fixed his arms, took a lock of Komori’s hair, and now he and Setsuna are heading for the lockup. Looks like Monoma wants his gear back. Speaking of…”

“Y’know,” Snipe cut in with a drawl, “I’m concerned about you, Kan.”

Vlad King looked over at his friend with a long, suffering look; he thought the problem child was in Class 1-A, but now his class had gotten *infected.*

“Your class shows a propensity for villainy. Awase and Sen and especially arm boy Monoma here.”

“The first two, yeah; but Monoma?” Kan looked surprised. Yes, Recovery Girl would not be happy about Monoma catching Aizawa’s problem child’s arm-breaking disease, and then even one-upping him so spectacularly. However, Monoma had not been as bad as the Devil Duo. Though, he would be changing his mind after gutting Present Mic with a cheerful smile, later.

“Did you teach him stripping? ‘Cause he looks like a stripper,” Snipe hammered, going for the throat.

Vlad King sputtered as the last comment caught everyone else’s attention in the faculty room. Nedzu looked far too amused by this turn of events. Even Aizawa was pleased, probably because he wasn’t the only one with a problem child, Vlad King thought sourly. And the comment wasn’t wrong. The teachers had seen how Monoma was discreetly checked out by the heroes.

Midnight teased, “It was *so* nice of you Kan, to rear another 18+ hero. Are you teaching him to engage with high-class clubs?”

Vlad King reddened. Oh, he knew who to blame: Aizawa. This was revenge for Vlad King’s comments back in UA, in their Civil War. *No one* could hold a grudge like Aizawa. The surprise on the man's face was – Ah shit, it was Monoma’s idea, wasn’t it.

“It makes sense. Maximum exposure–” Vlad King started, knowing he’d never convince them it was not his fault. Not when his other teachers wanted it to be his problem. It could be worse, he thought.

“Yes… maximum exposure…” Midnight suggested with a sly wink.

“–For his and Yaoyorozu’s Quirk.” Vlad King added, willfully ignoring Midnight’s widening grin. Forget the students, *he* needed counseling.

“Midnight,” Nedzu commented, “After the exercise concludes, would you take Monoma under your wing? While the exposure angle is somewhat correct, Monoma has a talent for the image and the role. It would be a shame to waste it.”

Vlad King looked at the smiling rodent with horror.

“Mmmhmm. Kan did most of the work,” Midnight let her voice drop to a sultry level. ‘Can’t let just the girls have fun,’ she thought.

‘…this day cannot get worse,’ Vlad King thought.

And then the screen showed the villain team starting an all-out assault on the hero base.

Goddamnit Murphy, I didn’t say shit!

Midnight stared at the monitor, mind only half focused on the scenes playing out, or on Kan still trying to sputter a defense for his student. The other half was looking at the bigger picture. Just as she had felt like she was beginning to see the pattern of the hidden war, Kingpin went and did something insane and audacious. A full-frontal attack on the hero headquarters? And after the Paragon had left their moral low and manpower understaffed? It was a mistake to leave the hero base so weak, yes, but for Midoriya to jump on it, to rush in like this is–

Midnight froze, putting the pieces she hadn’t paid attention to together. *Midoriya always meant to attack the hero base.* He had been waiting for an opening. The Paragon, with his disheartening ‘defend or die’ order, was not only tanking the morale of his team, but leaving them all wide open for a raid. Still, Kingpin had not acted so boldly as to trash the hero base. It would not be something so easily seen as a potential opening.

She recalled a conversation earlier in the week, in the time leading up to the exercise. The various teachers had been discussing memorable

villains, and All Might had talked about criminals measured by potency. While not wrong, her experiences with the criminals Velvet Rose and Poison Edge stressed that the most dangerous villains had *audacity.* Velvet Rose had taught her that no place was safe when she'd left love letters in her apartment, while Poison Edge had made his name attacking fortified police stations. It was a little disconcerting seeing the mild-mannered Midoriya turn into this ruthless Kingpin, whose act would not stand out among her own gallery of past enemies. If this continued, she might need therapy, likely of the alcoholic kind.

Probably with Kan.

"When this is over, we need to handle this correctly," she said to the group of astonished watchers. Aizawa was grinning at the sight of Kingpin driving in the fourth-floor window on the screen. "If we crucify Katsuki for his *many* wrong choices, he might take the criticism even worse. We do not want him to not take orders again, but he does need to *change."*

All Might sighed in agreement, though with more than just Bakugou's consequences on his mind. He was growing quite glad Izuku had not decided to become a villain. None of the things the Kingpin had really done were with his Quirk – even most of the museum's battle damage had been Monoma using the strength, and wasn't that a sight to behold? What he kept to himself was that there was no realistic way for Katsuki to become the number one hero with Izuku in the running; at 5% Full Cowl, Izuku could match Katsuki's full strength, if not the level of destruction the explosive user caused. Izuku would eventually add twenty times to that. Katsuki simply could not. And then in the fight in the basement of the museum, Izuku had demonstrated the sheer *difference* of how the two fought. He had stacked the deck in his favor as quickly and efficiently as possible, and Bakugou had charged forwards into it with eyes closed.

"I think," he said with a wry grin as Present Mic still looked sick at the arms being torn off thing, "–that we should impress upon the heroes that they need to be satisfied with what they can accomplish. One problem the heroes have is that they are not supporting each other in morale." All Might had seen worse than the mental tricks the villains were playing at, but the classics are known for a reason. "This has allowed cracks to appear. I suspect Young Midoriya has developed psychological profiles?"

Aizawa nodded, "He has. The villains developed a profile on each

hero, standard operating procedures for the encounters." The dark-haired man considered All Might curiously, while he disliked showboating, he was well aware that All Might was no slouch intellectually. "You noticed?"

At the other teachers' curious looks, Aizawa continued, "Even if not ordered to do so, the heroes should be showing more initiative. Look at their situation, Ingenium should not be so hidebound, Shouto so sure of himself to confront only through force, Uravity to not question orders and tactics."

On the screen, Kodai and her team of survivors escaped, locking down the computers as they left. In the wreckage lay the downed forms of Tsubruaba and Manga, both of who had been 'killed' in the assault. Interestingly, Komori was still considered alive, though the Aizawa-bot was now being thoroughly dismembered piece by piece by a focused Monoma using Kaibara's quirk.

And on the top floor, Izuku grabbed the cape, pulling it from a statue in the form of Gran Torino.

In the meantime, the heroes had finally reached the end of the abandoned sewers, with nothing to see for it but two more fatalities from the traps and the villains who had kept guard…

"And we can all see how that ended up," Aizawa finished.

The heroes fell into a contemplative silence, even as the villains finished their raid and disappeared, the heroes regrouping as they left.

Day 2: 12 hours, 9 minutes (12:09 pm, local time)

Midnight stared at the screen, a growing sense of tension making her hair stand on end as Setsuna began to rant at Bakugou. And the perspective it gave was eye-opening. Nothing but physical training and sparring? Really?

She still didn't know how Setsuna was working with the villains. What was the loophole? How did she get the approval–

"Wait."

Bakugou looked… intense, and from a camera, the angle offset, she caught Izuku, who stood behind Setsuna shifting, hand reaching behind his back. Setsuna gave a flippant response that Midnight

missed as she focused, seeing Izuku slowly draw his handgun.

Across the observation room, most of the teachers began to speak or twitch, all seeing what was about to happen as though it were a trainwreck in slow motion.

“Fuck. No. I just wanna know, how the fuck are you a villain? Switching sides is against the goddamn rules!”

Everyone could see the confusion, even as Izuku brought up a gun, the mask he wore shifting from joyful to menacing as he pulled the trigger.

Twice.

The world seemed to go silent. But Midnight saw... something flash across Setsuna’s face. Between the wide eyes of surprise and the almost broken sting of betrayal, she thought she saw… no, there was no way that Midnight read that shake of the body right. Even if she did see that, it wasn’t her job to deal with it.

Then the feed between teams stopped rolling and Midoriya pulled off his helmet, an apologetic expression on his face.

“I am really, really sorry about this Setsuna.”

The teachers looked away from the conversation, Izuku having stepped close, speaking softly.

“That's how he got away with it.” Aizawa broke the silence first. “Setsuna was never a member of his team. She was always a prisoner of war or an adversary.”

Kan almost spoke, mouth open and shifting, before he stopped himself and leaned back with a sigh.

Nedzu spoke up instead.

“In less than thirty hours. Midoriya has acquired thirteen of the fifteen objectives, destroyed several buildings, eliminated eleven of the twenty-five heroes, and not lost a single member.” The principal sighed and looked around. “I do believe that we have severely misjudged exactly how this event would play out.”

The following silence of the room was broken by the chuckles of Aizawa as he lay back down.

Setsuna sighed as she was escorted from the city, though she did look at the small bag she had been given, “As an apology for not being able to keep you on our side,” Izuku had said.

It was filled with chocolate, and small notebook.

Out of curiosity, she opened the book, seeing a letter on the first page.

Setsuna,

We’re very sorry about how this event has played out, and our part in manipulating you. However, in light of that, we have decided to help you out as much as we can. This book is filled with notes and advice which you can use to help your Quirk develop, and the contact numbers for our group chat. We hope that you forgive us and that you are willing to join us again in the future, without the deception.

Sincerely Yours,
The Hero Class Villains.

For a moment she just stared at it, before a smile stretched across her face.

Maybe Extortion wasn't quite dead yet.

As the Table Turns

Chapter Summary

The Villains plan their next move, the Heroes get mad.

Day 2: 12 hours, 44 minutes (12:44 pm, local time)

Izuku sighed and leaned back against the wall of the 'War Room,' as it had come to be called. He slowly let his legs give out and slid downwards, face in his hands, trying to calm down and breathe. Killing Setsuna… that had been hard. Pulling the trigger. Thinking the way he did, justifying it with 'it's just a game,' or 'none of it is real'...

But her expression, on the playback of the camera, before she turned... that look when she realized she was betrayed.

He rubbed at his eyes again and took a deep breath. The rest of the crew was packing up the objectives, getting things ready to bail for when they hit the penthouse tonight or tomorrow. They were relaxing, too. Celebrating somewhat. He knew most had grabbed their lunch boxes and set up around the Tower, enjoying themselves after an eventful morning.

"Izuku."

The voice made him jerk, eyes darting up to catch the concerned frown of Hitoshi as he leaned around the doorway, "Are you…" his expression twisted, trying for concerned but ending up… somewhere between constipated and as if he smelled a skunk. "Are you doing okay?"

Izuku opened his mouth, feeling the urge to reassure his friend and not let him worry but–

"Not really. Shit. Fuck. Don–Don't worry. I'm… I'm fine."

–the words just sorta… poured out.

"...There's like five answers there and I think only the first three are accurate," Hitoshi snarked, stepping around and sliding down the wall to sit shoulder-to-shoulder with Izuku, his tired eyes focused on the green-haired teen.

"How are you? And I mean *you,* Izuku. Not Kingpin. I mean... it's been

almost thirty hours. Closer to thirty-six, since we started early yesterday. I know we were talking about failsafes… do you think we'll need them?"

Izuku closed his eyes and leaned his head back, breathing slowly.

Did he need the failsafes? Was he so close to that edge? Stressed and distracted and… *vindictive* enough that he needed to be pulled back and curbed?

...He didn't think so.

Not yet.

Neito's special escape was his own choice, and he made it with glee after they tested Setsuna's powers out. Something about the feel of regrowing his limbs being really interesting if somewhat disturbing.

Setsuna was a scheme between the four leaders: Neito, Momo, Hitoshi and Izuku himself. It was dastardly and underhanded and cruel… but it was…

It was a massive boon.

Setsuna, by simply talking with them and giving the most basic of information, had probably saved a third of the villains from injury or capture. Just knowing who was *awake* had saved them so much time and effort.

"I don't know. I mean, we have two objectives left for the perfect run. If we play it safe, get them and get out early…" Izuku trailed off, eyes staring off into the middle distance, face twisted with a mix of determination and hesitance, "It… it would be the smart play."

Hitoshi sat up straighter, "Okay. The smart play is to get it and go… but what do you want to do? What play does the badass 'Kingpin' want to do?"

Izuku closed his eyes and leaned back once more. After taking a deep breath to steady himself, he began to speak.

Katsuki scowled as he looked over the remains of the kitchen attached to the hero base.

Fucking mold. Fungi and mold and massive mushroom colonies covered every square inch of the room. Everything but a small crate of

MRE rations that sat in the corner, their box and bags airtight. He bit back the stream of curses that welled up and exhaled sharply, moving away from the kitchen door and wandering back towards the center of the base.

The computer system was fucked as well, the screens and keyboards destroyed and the computer towers and filters clogged with fungi. Thankfully, not all of the servers were destroyed and most of the data had backups off-site, but almost all of the consoles were now filled with mushroom infested circuitry and virus-ridden code. They had rounded up a few tablets from the barracks that the others had been using, but most of their scanners and forensics gear were fucked. Even the Aizawa-bot in the cell had been completely torn apart.

Thankfully, injuries were minimal or non-existent for most of the surviving team members. Iida and several of the Class B students that were left were now working at salvaging the main conference room computers at least, though it was slow going.

But more importantly? Bakugou is getting sick and tired of this ‘being on the back foot’ bullshit. But he can't change it - he doesn't know where the villains vanished. Not their next target or where they were going to show up next.

He slammed his hand into the wall and growled, but then the door to the conference room opened and Kodai burst through, tablet in hand.

“I FOUND SOMETHING!”

Izuku was calm and composed once more, his minor breakdown shoved aside as he began to enact what he and Hitoshi had called the ‘Maddest Plan.’

Before it could come to its conclusion, he needed to find that last objective. The fourteenth was directly above him, sitting at the top floor of the tallest building in the district.

Honestly, it was one of the more insane things they had decided while planning. There were easily a dozen more subtle and secluded locations around the district they could have set up in, a bunch of hotels or apartment buildings, a few warehouses, even an old movie theater had been on the list of possible locations. But they had decided to take refuge with audacity, moving into the 45th floor of the skyscraper in the dead center of the district.

The fact that the most heavily-alarmed objective they knew of was literally less than thirty feet above their conference room was just a side benefit. Despite Mei's best efforts, it was still alarmed to hell and back, and trying to take the objective, which was inside a massive safe hanging in the center of the top floor, was just asking for entire hero team to swarm them.

Speaking of which, the most ironic thing about the Tower's location was that it was located less than two blocks from the hero offices. And while most of the villains' storage and operation rooms were on the far side, the War Room with its heavy blackout curtains had a direct line of sight to the hero agency's front door.

Izuku stood in the War Room, hands tapping and flipping through holographic feeds as he ran search algorithms. He scanned through Mei's hacked monitoring systems across the city, trying to find that fifteenth objective.

"Izuku, any luck?" came the call from the door, Mei, Hitoshi, and Mezou filing in. Mezou held a crate with their lunch boxes in it. Hitoshi and Mei stepped up to look at the holo-screens.

"No. Nothing so far. Take a look," with a sigh, Izuku turned and waved his hands to transfer the holographic display from around the dark curtains of the window to hover over the floor in the center of the half-circle of couches and armchairs they used. The rest of the King's Crew took their seats while Izuku grabbed his lunch box, pulling out a sealed bowl of katsudon. With a few hand motions, the data resolved itself into a 3D model of the city, green and blue lines of its physical structure dotted with red message boxes and markers for cleared locations and points of interest.

"Kouda's swarm managed to clear a solid 80% of the buildings, and even then, they couldn't find everything. For most of the others, Mei managed to snag the heroes' files back on day one while the bank was falling. Sadly, we were only able to scrub a few of them and got information on ten of the objectives. The other three of which were Kouda's work, and the fourteenth was sheer luck. That still leaves one last objective, which I guarantee is some sort of trick. Mainly because I bet good money that it was Nedzu who set it up."

"So you think it's a trap," Mezou commented, forming multiple eyes off his arms to observe the hologram in greater detail.

"Yep. Some sort of logic puzzle or timed-release thing would make

sense. He wants to keep conflict active. If we go out and search the city that leaves us vulnerable. And, with the sewers sealed to prevent tracking, and with the rain still pouring, we are stuck above ground right now," said Izuku, nibbling on a piece of pork as he paced the outer edge of the map. Mei began to run her own algorithms to check for any hits related to the objective.

"So… if I were Nedzu, how would I play this?" Izuku murmured to himself, biting at his thumb as he paced. "Look at the things we've done. Theft and robbery were covered, same with espionage, kidnapping, blackmail, murder…" Izuku mentally ran through the rest of the crimes. "But what would he have us do next? There are a few things still missing but... most of the things I can think of are more esoteric or minor felonies," he said, frowning.

"So the crime angle is a bust for now, but what else could it be decided by?" Hitoshi cut in, shifting the gears.

"...Drama. What would be the most dramatic or... I guess, cinematic? We've been treating this like a stage play, let's take it a step further. Look at it as a story. How do we unlock the final–?"

Izuku paused, the rest shifting to look at him.

"Oh, that sounds like a good silence," Mei giggled, leaning forward with a smear of barbecue from her lunch across her lip.

"Final. The *final* objective."

Izuku turned back and looked at his leadership team. With the exception of Neito, they were all here, and Neito was still going through checks to see if there were consequences of his auto-dismemberment.

"We have thirteen objectives. The fourteenth is literally right above us, and the fifteenth is missing. I think… I think we need to get number fourteen before fifteen appears," he stated, looking at the map before he closed down the holo-screen with a gesture.

"Mezou, Mei, get the teams going and clear out when they finish lunch. Move our stuff to the bailout areas, make sure the objectives are crated up and ready for transport. Everyone get geared up and ready to go at a moment's notice. Hitoshi, get out and set up a third location for overwatch. Either the theater or the westside apartments would be best. Take Kyouka and Momo for comm and supply support."

Izuku turned and looked up, “I’ll get ready for heavy combat and grab number fourteen, then follow after the Tower is clear. I can take the express route down and out with my bike.”

“Will do,” “Understood,” ”Sounds like a plan,” came the responses, the other three finishing up their meals and standing to get ready.

“I figure if this works out, we’ll be ghosts by the time the he–” Suddenly, Izuku could see his breath, the pale white mist of his words puffing in front of him as the air temperature suddenly dropped-

‘–OhshitIknowthis, havedealtwiththisbefore–’

He reached up and held the ‘transmit to all’ switch on his comm as he dived forwards towards the center of the Tower, his leaders following on instinct.

“EVERYONE BRACE!”

And then the Tower *shuddered.*

As the temperature dropped, becoming unseasonably cold, the lights across the floor flickered off - whether from the damage or from someone disabling the lines to the building, he didn't know, but Izuku pushed away and moved, feeling the slight angle to the floor of the building, not much, barely any incline or shift.

Moving to the window, he pulled the curtains open and looked out over the streets below.

“Oh, *shit.”*

Below his perch, where the street once sat, was now a glacier that reached up and wrapped around the lower half of the Tower. Long archways and twisting white spirals and blue spires reached almost two-thirds of the way to his viewpoint. And even from his height, he could see movement.

Three, seven, twelve, *fourteen,* he counted quickly, eyes flickering from point to point, mind already racing. No time… *fuck, FUCK,* this was the entire remaining hero team. And they were already moving to assault the Tower, splitting into teams and aiming for broken windows and breached walls into the upper floors.

He reached up and pressed the comm switch once more, before giving the only order he could think of. “ALL VILLAINS, HEROES

INCOMING, EVAC THE OBJECTIVES AND DEFEND!”

He paused and looked up.

“Shit, I have to do it now or it’ll be out of reach. Fuck the alarm.”

He bolted for the elevators and stairs, the rest of the villain leaders already speaking into comms and organizing the evacuation. Mezou and Mei were making a break for the now open elevator shaft. Izuku paused before reaching the door, looking to the side where the suitcases Hitoshi had recovered, and the ‘prototypes’ Mei had made for him, were resting.

“Better to have it, than not,” he muttered, quickly opening the briefcases to reveal rows of uniform cylinders, and seizing the gleaming red and black metal of the prototypes. “God, I hope these work.”

One day before the exam

Izuku shifted, testing the weight of the contraption on him as Mei looked him over, hands occasionally darting to the laptop to change a value for one piece or another, adjusting the response times and intervals of the metal plates as they expanded and contracted against the leather lining. The soft whirring of the servos was almost silent as they shifted to settle with his motion.

“And calibration… is done!” Mei finally decided, saving the file and presets she had set for him. With that finished, she grabbed his arm and carefully began dismantling the prototype, pulling each gunmetal and blueish piece from its slot and setting it aside. “One final run over with enamel and color for your style, and we should be good to go. Momo finally got the stability issue down on the storage cartridges as well, and we have a solid two dozen prepped, but you can only use six per arm right now, the mechanism is too heavy otherwise.”

“Awesome! You wanted to do a final stress test for them, right?” Izuku asked, trying to ignore the way Mei had to lean in close as she lifted his arm to release a latch or component from the leather.

“Yep! I have the most flawed of the cartridges, the first real success, set up for charging. When it breaks we should have a lower-end threshold for how much kinetic energy the matrix can hold,” Mei finished with his arms and he stood up, pulling off the leather linings as he followed her to the far side of the workshop, where Cementoss

had installed a three-foot-thick reinforced concrete wall just for testing of this kind.

There, sitting dead center, was what looked like an old strongman test from a carnival, if it had been laid horizontally across the ground. A solid metal target lined in leather over a meter across stood there, while on the side, a bright red LED screen waited with a current reading of '0.'

"Alright, test it without your super Quirk."

Izuku nodded and set his stance before throwing a solid punch with all his weight and body behind it. He winced slightly despite the padding, what with the target being solid metal.

On the side, the meter spiked from 0 to 322.

"Is that metric?" he grumbled, seeing the weird letters 'lb' at the bottom of the number.

"Nope. Old American standard. Sadly, you don't pass the pre-Quirk record for the strongest punch. Bruce Lee still holds that at over 350 for his weight and height," Mei commented, eyeing the testing board, "Hit it with Full Cowl."

Izuku nodded and stepped back, getting a bit more distance before slowly tapping into the well of power that was One for All, letting it condense and race through his body. With a sharp exhale, he threw another punch.

"KAI!"

The metal dented from the impact, sections of the leather ripping from the force as the side meter spiked.

From 322 to *4,021 pounds of pressure.*

Almost 3,700 pounds of force in one punch.

"Damn Ten Million, and you said that was five percent?" Mei whistled.

"That was closer to four, I held back a bit to save my knuckles," Izuku chuckled, holding up the hand that he had punched with to reveal several scrapes and beads of blood already forming across his knuckles.

Three minutes of minor medical treatment later, and Izuku now wore the reinforced leather under glove from the prototype. He kept up a steady stream of 2% empowered punches to the target, the number beside him spiked in increments of around twelve hundred pounds of impact force per hit.

At around 23,000 pounds of impact, there was a cracking sound from behind the metal, and Mei jumped up to stop the test. Carefully, she unbolted the target and pulled out an internal compensator, in the center of which was a perfectly triangular prism of dark green crystal, lined with glowing purple cracks.

“Looks like we found the lower threshold that the matrix can carry. I'll note this down...” she raced to her laptop.

Izuku nodded, holding up the crystal to the light, before sighing and setting it down, chuckling softly as he eyed the manic gleam in Mei’s expression.

“Kinetic batteries… What a cool invention, Mei.”

Ice Age Combat Woes

Chapter Summary

The Ice Man Cometh.

Day 2: 13 hours, 3 minutes (18 minutes before the hero team's assault)

"I found where that livestream came from!" Yui called out, pushing a tablet onto a table that had been cleared of fungus by judicious application of Todoroki's flames, "And it's all because of Setsuna!" she tapped and a map showed up, twisting it to show a dot with a timestamp.

"What is that?" Rin muttered leaning in for a closer look.

"It's Setsuna's commlink! She never turned off the GPS tracker, which means we have her route and past movements! It's part of the standard tech package for most hero comms, and it's used to keep track of conflicts and recovery operations. Setsuna had hers on!"

She tapped the screen and the map zoomed out to a larger view of the city, with a green dot over the hero base, and a bright red dot located *in the middle of the tallest building in the district.*

"How the hell did you even find this out?" Rin muttered, looking at the map and pulling one of the few other tablets closer to look for blueprints of the city.

"Look, I wondered where Setsuna had gone and remembered that the GPS data is saved on one of the remote servers. We're not supposed to mess with it because it's what the teachers are using as a security measure, but if it's a standard hero comm package, then we should have access, and we did! All I had to do was match the time of her execution with her GPS data, and we got a hit. And I know about this because unlike *some* people, I read the user manuals on all my equipment. It's how I locked the consoles when I left," Yui rambled.

In the meantime Bakugou paced, form tense.

"We need to hit hard, strike fast and storm the–" he began to command, not even looking at the team as he began to lay out his plan.

"No."

The room froze, tension spiking as the figure few had noticed leaning against the wall spoke up.

Todoroki Shouto.

The fire and ice user locked gazes with an enraged Bakugou.

“Of the last five missions you’ve commanded, none have succeeded. We have been outmaneuvered, out-fought and expected at every turn. And now you wish to charge full-speed into a building that the villains have had a day-and-a-half to prepare, fortify and modify to their heart’s desire?”

Todoroki’s voice was a slow, precise drone, languid and venomous.

“I refuse to follow any plan of your making into such a fight. Not unless you share your leadership, or forfeit to another.”

Silence.

The entire hero team, barely more than a dozen members strong, watched as the two strongest fighters they had squared off.

“...Fine,” Came the unexpected reply, voice pitched into a low hiss. “The mission is yours. You want to lead? Then *lead,* Half-and-Half. When this falls apart, don’t come crying to me, asshole.”

Bakugou stepped back and sat down, face locked in a stony mask.

Turning, Todoroki swept his gaze across the assembled heroes. “Objections?” Another beat of silence, “Then let’s begin.”

“To start, we’re splitting up into three distinct teams. First–”

“–is containment.”

Todoroki hid in the cover of the alley, using a small mirror to gaze at the shape of the Tower’s lower floors. No movement. No eyes on the targets. He tapped his earpiece to broadcast to his team.

“Containment. Check in.”

“Rin. I’m in place at the back. I have a clear view of the street and a high angle over the northwest corner of the block.”

“Kinoko. I have a few dozen colonies worth of spores stored up and ready,

waiting for your command."

"Hagakure. I have visuals on the building and the few cameras we still have access to are up and running back here at base."

"I have the front in sight. Hold 'til my start."

Shouto leaned back against the wall and breathed deeply, letting the familiar chill of his ice flow through him, slowly preparing to be released. He held still, letting the pressure, the cold and biting frost he was so used to condense tighter and tighter, building in force. Around him, frost began to form along the walls of the building, diamond-like dust appearing in the still moist air and the faint drops of rain still falling turning into hail and sleet as they fell near.

The frost grew and grew, Todoroki watching carefully as ice slowly began to grow across the right half of his outfit. He held back, waiting, waiting - the strain of the cold pushing his limits.

Stepping around the corner, he dragged his arm and the ice around, feeling the sharp stabbing of his blood starting to freeze ever-so-slightly before he reached out, grasped the chill around him, and *pushed.*

Over a month ago, on a bright and sunny day, he had filled a stadium with ice with a single motion.

Today, with the help of rain and clouds, he covered *half a city block.* Spires and massive pillars of frozen water reached for the sky, places where his control of such a massive surge of power had faltered, leaving long curves and flowing gaps like waves crashing upon a shore. The Tower itself shifted and groaned with the force, windows cracking and entire sections of the lower floor being sheared away by ice and snow.

"Go phase two!"

Todoroki kept his eyes open as he called upon his fire to stave away frostbite and hypothermia.

"After containment begins, we will have the lower floors locked down. But, to fight against the Tower, we will divide into two teams. The first will be assaulting from the outside, responding to attempts to break out and sealing off escape routes."

Yui shoved out of her own alley, Iida at her side. With each step, she began to grow in size, shooting from her casual stature to almost thirty feet tall in seconds, already pushing off and charging up the massive glacier that now wreathed the Tower. Iida raced ahead, sure steps following minor shifts and ledges for grip and speed, his form blurring as he zig-zagged up the ice. Meanwhile, Yui took far larger steps that let her clear the obstacles.

With her height, she could see the three other members of her team also beginning their assault. To the left, she could see the blur that was Tsunotori, her hooves gouging through snow and ice as she leaped further and further up the glacier, her horns lowered and ready for a charge at any opponent who appeared.

To the right, she could see the leaping forms of Ojiro and Shishida, both using their far stronger upper bodies and developed balance to spring among the massive pillars and archways of ice and climb higher, faster. Shishida, in particular, was pushing his form larger and stronger, clearing massive leaps with each bound and shift.

Then she saw it, the first sign that they were in the right place, and that the fight had begun.

Sen and Awase kicked out a window above them, both teens pulling guns and unloading with little regard for accuracy. Around the heroes, splatters of red against the blue and white of the glacier burst into existence. Without slowing, each member deployed their preferred tactic of countering. From dodging and leaping out of range, circling the building to fall from out of their line of sight like Tsunotori and Ojiro, to taking advantage of cover like Shishida and Iida, who were jumping and darting from secured pillar to secure pillar on the glacier as they avoided the villain team's advances.

Meanwhile, Yui simply ripped up a wall of ice as a shield, holding it before her to take the shots of red.

And then she *charged.*

From the corner of her eye, she saw a shadow across the ice and had to hold off a smirk.

'And there's phase three.'

"The final team will be the ones to charge in. Their job is to keep the villain team moving. If they keep the villains from holing up for a

siege by pushing them down and out, we can pick them off as they try to escape. Anyone in the lower levels will be sealed in and we can release and capture them floor by floor," said Todoroki as he mapped out possible insertion points.

"Uraraka, if you can get Kirishima and Tetsutetsu to the upper floors they can charge through the building from above. You just need–"

"–to take the high road."

Far above the conflict, Uraraka took slow and deep breaths, holding tightly to the shoulders of her two fighters as they floated up and over the Tower, their long parabolic arc fueled by both Sero and Uraraka herself, a tether of tape holding all three together around their waists.

To her left, if she squinted, she could see the long arcing shape of said tape user as he swung up and around from the closest buildings towards the upper floors of the Tower. If she had to guess, she would land maybe three-fourths of the way up. And once they landed, Bakugou would make his entrance.

Finally, though, they were in range.

"Ready?" she asked, trying not to puke.

"LET'S DO IT!" came the stereo shouts from the two brawlers, Kirishima in her right hand, and Tetsutetsu in her left. As the boys began to harden and shift, Uraraka took a deep breath…

And reached around the two boys to clap her hands.

And then they were falling towards the Tower.

Izuku kicked in the door at the top of the stairwell, revealing the posh penthouse of the building. Pulling on the leather and metal of his gear, he eyed the safe, ignoring the sudden alarm that began blaring through the floor at his unauthorized entry.

He rushed through the small residential area, a living room and loft that covered the outer edges of the room ignored as he focused on his target.

A massive safe, almost two meters in length and half that again in height, hung by large chains in the center of the grand, arcing ballroom that covered the center of the penthouse floor.

Izuku scowled at it, eyes already tracing its shape and size as he yanked tightly at the mechanism over his left arm, pulling metal clasps and servos tight to leather and skin.

The go-bag he had detoured for and grabbed from his room was hanging from his shoulder, the gleam of a helmet visible through the open zipper.

“Great. I have to deal with this,” Izuku muttered, eyes taking note of what appeared to be the main security features of the safe.

Along the walls of the ballroom, fifty-six of the three-pointers from the entrance exam began to wake up, eyes glowing a deep menacing red as they locked onto Izuku.

“Target acquired, target acquired,” came the repeated voice cues, the robots moving to gather between Izuku and the safe.

“Wonderful, I have to kick all of your asses before I can get to the box. Goddamnit.”

Izuku sparked up Full Cowl, his hands glowing and flickering with deep green sparks of energy as he readied himself, fists clenched tight.

He did *not* have time for this.

Shouting, he charged forward, into the fray.

Sen twisted and pulled Awase back with him as the two dove around a corner in the building. A massive chunk of ice crashed through the windows and sent glass shards dancing across the floor next to them.

Hacker’s voice came over the comms, crackling in their ears. *“Sen, Awase, head up two floors and get above the maze outside, then take the emergency stairs. Kodai, Iida, and Shishida are moving in on your position. You need to slow them down. Awase, seal the door after you.”*

“Got it, Hack. Let’s go, Hold Up,” Awase called as the two made for the stairwell. Booted feet crunched noisily on the shattered glass that sprinkled the floor as they sprinted to the steel door of the stairwell.

As Awase turned and pulled the door closed, he could see the burly animalistic form of Shishida pulling himself in through the window down the hall, which would have flanked them if they weren't repositioning.

“SORRY, WE’RE CLOSED, COME BACK LATER!” Sen shouted as the door closed, Awase placing his hand on the wall, the familiar hissing of his Quirk sealing steel to concrete.

They turned and began to quickly pick their way up past the trapped stairwell, Awase leading the way since he was the one to set up a good portion of them with his Quirk when he had been hanging around the Tower in his downtime. In fact, most of this had not even been supplied by Mei, Momo, or Neito. Almost all of the hooks and lines had been bought in bulk from the Awase’s family hardware store.

He ducked past and around a web of thin fishing line that hung from pulleys and wall hooks, some of them with thin weights and bright ribbons, others notched around the railings of the stairs. But among the mess of wire lay some nasty surprises. Before they could even hit the first of the two landings, they began to hear Shishida pound on the door, the thud and creak of metal deforming under the staccato beat of his fists.

The two ducked and leaped as they sped up, Awase fusing several traps they couldn't get around so they wouldn't activate. Sadly, disabling them was the fastest way. It still took almost a minute for them to reach the landing they were heading for. To Awase’s annoyance, the densest sections of traps were at the bottom of the stairwell and just before the top few floors.

As they swung open the door, Sen reached into his jacket and pulled three grenades, removing the pins one by one and tossing them down the stairs.

In seconds, the sound of hissing echoed through the stairwells, Sen and Awase closed and sealed the doors behind them. In the stairwell, billowing black smoke filled and clouded the area, concealing the traps from view, while a thin, greenish-white haze began to mix and flow through the black smoke.

Below, the door continued to be deformed under Shishida's fists.

“Shit. Bosses, I found out why we don’t have power,” Tokoyami muttered into the comm, flinching back around the corner as the bright sparks fired once more, the chill of the tunnel only slightly mitigated by his cloak.

He was in the tunnels, right at the opening into the sewers in the basement of the Tower, and before him was a chaotic mass of ice and

frost. Flickering flashes of sparking energy fell from it as the power lines for the building grounded out from a torn cable into the ice.

“The sewers are an untenable option as well. The ice has breached all the way down into the bedrock in some places, and any rainwater that was down here was frozen just by proximity. We need another way out,” Kuroiro added, stepping back from investigating his own exit tunnel.

“Shit. Plan B. Everyone on the lower floors, gather and clear the way from the elevator shaft on the ground floor to the loading docks. Cut loose the elevator if you have to. We won't need it,” came Hacker’s voice, clipped and brisk from the tension that filled the Tower.

Tokoyami looked back down the hallway to Kuroiro, who was raising an eyebrow.

“Got it. I hope you guys have a plan,” Tokoyami confirmed, already turning to leave.

“We’re working it out as we go. Get moving,” Shinsou cut in.

The two users of darkness picked up the pace as they headed back into the Tower proper.

Mezou checked around himself one last time, two go-bags strapped around his back as he eyed the now mostly empty armory. Mei and Momo had the objectives and were boxing them up two floors down, while he ran to grab as many weapons as he could. The bags held a dozen spare RG13 handguns, the last of the grenades that hadn’t been handed out, and a few boxes of ammo and spare computer drives.

He turned, stepping across the open floor plan towards the stairwell, shifting to adjust the bags, when he heard it.

Shattering glass and a pair of thuds.

He paused in his movement, a tentacle arm raising and blinking at the room over his shoulder as he let loose a long, near-silent sigh of annoyance.

There, rising from a crouch across the floor before a shattered window, were a trio of heroes.

Kirishima, Tetsutetsu, and Uraraka.

“Hiya, Shouji! Surrender?” Came the sunshine smile and polite call from Uraraka, even as she dropped to a combat stance, the act mirrored by her companions.

A shrug of his arms left the bags on the floor, and Mezou shifted his shoulder’s mass, making them slimmer and letting the long jacket he wore fall to the ground. He tapped an earpiece embedded on his lower arms, a mouth forming near it. Meanwhile, the other four arms were beginning to shift more for combat than general use.

“This is Assault. I’m going to be a bit late. Seems I have some gatecrashers to deal with.”

He turned, looking at the three hero team members as his primary arms reached back and grasped the two large metal batons along his spine that were, until now, concealed by his coat, sliding them free.

“You need back up?” Con Man’s laconic voice came across loud and clear, along with a vague level of interest and worry that Mazou picked up.

With a twist, glowing purple lines began to etch across the steel of the staves.

“No. There’s only three of them. Might actually be a nice warm-up,” Mezou cut the line as Con Man began to chuckle.

As the three heroes tensed in anger at the commentary, Mezou focused, mass slowly leaving his lower and middle arms, his upper arms beginning to bulge and lengthen, growing larger and more developed.

“Now then, to answer your question, Uravity; I’m gonna have to decline.”

And with a shift and a spin, Shouji threw himself into the fight.

2 days before the exam

Mezou rolled back to his feet, panting as Momo and Izuku walked around in front of him. Momo stepped forwards with a long staff in hand and Izuku with a notebook in his. Momo kicked at the bars of steel on the ground, sending them up at the taller teen.

Shouji reached up and caught them, standing back to his full height as

he shifted into the stance Izuku and Momo had developed for him over the last few days.

“Shouji, keep your arms out farther. You want them in close, you’re a grappler at heart, use that,” Izuku called as he stepped back, Momo rushing forwards, staff at the ready.

The gym echoed with the sounds of ringing steel for the next hour, interspaced with occasional comments and minor corrections to his form.

Later, as the three sat and cooled down, Izuku grinned.

“I’ll make sure you get some better equipment for the exercise itself, something with a bit more of a kick, if I can. Besides the sticks, your results with the guns are some of the best so far. I figure with you on hand for midrange and guard duty, we should be able to keep key objectives safe.”

Momo nodded, “Your advancement with the Escrima is going surprisingly well. Even if you haven't mastered it yet, you’ve improved considerably.”

Bashful, Mezou rubbed his head, several eyes half-closing in embarrassment, “I’ve enjoyed sparring with you Momo, and thanks for your advice as well, Izuku. I feel like I’ve made some great strides in a short time.”

“You can thank me by putting it to good use. Both of you! I know you’ve had some long talks with Mei about designs, and I hope you both develop your skills, even if I’m not helping you personally.”

Izuku lay back on the mat, eyes closed and a soft smile on his face.

“I think we have a chance to win this…”

Mezou smirked beneath his mask, eyeing the pair as Momo looked at Izuku with a soft smile of her own.

Keep Cool and Stay Alive

Chapter Summary

Fights through the tower, layers of deceit and attack.

Day 2: 13 hours, 29 minutes (1:29 pm, local time)

Mezou spun, batons flashing up and around him as he fought off the coordinated attacks of Kirishima and Tetsutetsu, moving around the room. Kirishima came low and right, Tetsutetsu high and left. With a flip of the wrist, arms coming down and crossing the two sticks and swinging low, Kirishima was sent rolling backwards. Mezou leaned and rolled with his swing, letting Tetsutetsu fly over him.

The eyes on the back of his shoulders and arms focused on the steel user as one of Mezou's lower arms pulled up and fired another shot at the moving and dodging form of Uraraka, who was strafing the fight from cover to cover, slowly advancing and letting her comrades take the lead. Considering he had opened up with his handguns first, that strategy had proven to be surprisingly intelligent. Both Kirishima and Tetsutetsu were so far considered bulletproof with their Quirks fully deployed. The multiple red splatters across their outfits proved they were absolutely aware of that fact.

Kirishima came in for another round, kicking off and crossing his arms to tackle Mezou, as Tetsu ran in for another close combat bout.

Mezou shifted his stance and caught Kirishima's charge, his upper right arm dropping its stick and letting a lower arm catch it as his left arms all grabbed the staff and held it to catch the charge. Kirishima clanged off his defense and he rolled to take the blow. He then staggered half a step before the now free right arm shifted into a tentacle that snapped out and wrapped the redhead's arm tight, latching onto his hardened form with crushing force.

With a heave and a twist, Mezou's taller and heavier mass took command.

"Oh, shIT–" Kirishima's scream rose sharply in panic as he was pulled off his feet, having only a split second of surprise before he was flung full-force into Tetsutetsu.

Mezou let go, sending both tumbling across the floors, back toward

the wall of windows as one of his other eyes caught a rapid moving streak of pink and white behind him.

Mezou kept his stance focused on the two downed brawlers as he eyed the incoming third.

At the last moment, he dived, flipping backward and letting all six arms brace and hold his weight as he twisted, sending a full-body double kick to Uraraka's hastily raised guard. With her Quirk in effect, she was practically weightless. Due to his kick, she went blasting back across the room, through a drywall and plaster barrier, and into an office room.

Satisfied she was occupied for the moment, he turned back to the two slowly staggering up brawlers, adjusting his grip on the Escrima as he began to stalk towards them, the faint glow of his weapons brighter than they were at the start of the fight.

Sero glanced around, the eerie half-light getting to him as he crept through the building for the elevator shaft and stairwell. He finally found the elevator doors, and after a few seconds of struggling and using his tape to get a grip on the seam, he was pulling them apart. Slowly, the doors creaked open, revealing the pitch black of the shaft before him. Smiling, he tapped his comms.

"Hey, found the elevator, gonna go disable it now. Wish me luck."

He tapped a button on his helmet and a light concealed by the visor activated, shining across the darkness of the tunnel. Slowly, he shot a strand of tape up into the shaft, and began to climb.

Momo focused, wrapping the large bundle of boxes and objectives she was collecting once more, trying not to consider just how heavy and large it was. The coffin, crates, and several smaller boxes were hard enough to carry, but with the trussed up dummies strapped to the crates and one even shoved in the coffin, it was almost impossible to move. The entire bundle was over seven feet tall and almost as wide from all four sides. She had no idea how it would get out of the building, though Mei was furiously typing in the corner, so who knew?

"Fuck... Kendou!" Mei spoke up, surprising the two other girls from running a final check, Momo creating several more bungee cords in an effort to keep the entire thing together.

“Hacker?”

“You helped Izuku learn to drive the Mei-cycle, but can you fly it?”

Kendou bit her lip and considered. “I mean, I guess? But I doubt I’ll be all that great–”

“Doesn’t matter!” Mei tapped her keyboard some more, eyes focusing on some part of the screen as she furiously typed while talking, “It's got enough lift to carry most of the objectives, but it can't maintain it for long - in fact, if you lift it for too long it's just going to run out of fuel. But it can get the objectives out of the Tower… *Goddamnit,* we need the heroes to be distracted and this fucking glacier to go away,” she growled, then spoke again, “Hitoshi, any ideas?”

“Not really. The elevators are both fucked. Though– Shit, Kyouka, two floors down, Ojiro just broke in!– I’m really trying to keep us all alive here. Until Izuku is free we don't have enough firepower to deal with the Ice Man outside.” Hitoshi’s voice came over the comms, along with the crash of glass and a sudden series of click-hisses that she recognized as R13 rounds, *“Also, someone needs to tell Kodai that this ice-pillar-blocks-bullets thing is bullshit.”*

“Fuck. Any news on the heavies?”

“Todoroki is still recovering from hypothermia if that ball of fire on the edge of the glacier is any indication. Bakugou is still just… standing there. Watching us from the roof of the building across the intersection. Which, by the way, this calm and silent Bakugou is cree – FUCK OFF ASSHOLES – ping me out. SEN, AWASE, NORTH – fuck. Hold on, Hacker. LARC–”

The comms cut out, and three seconds later the Tower shook, the sound of an explosion echoing from down the building as Momo sighed.

“Dammit, Neito.”

Neito growled to himself as he ducked back around the corner, reloading his gun. Across the hall from him, hiding around the other set of inner support pillars was Con Man, mask and all. That interrogation mark mask was suddenly very relevant.

Neito decided to ignore the cool breeze now flowing from the massive hole that stretched across the outer wall of the building where his duffle bag of explosives had gone off.

“What, it destroyed the ice pillar!” The copycat complained, focusing and swapping from Awase’s Weld (used to stick the bag to the window) to Kaibara’s Twist. He could see Kodai now, staggering back and mostly unharmed, but clearly pissed, though she had taken cover a bit farther away. Probably to stop the ringing of a head height explosion.

“Dammit Neito, that hole goes lower which–”

“–Means I don't have to go through all that tear gas and smoke.”

The two froze and simultaneously looked down the hall, where the slim and compact form of Shishida, the Beast Quirk user, was climbing over the shattered floor, eyes glinting behind his glasses.

“Larceny. When we get out of this, I'm going to punch you. At least twice.”

“That's fair. Sorry, Con.”

With a rush, Shishida expanded in size and growled, hunching forwards as his form grew to almost block out the light from the outside.

Con Man and Larceny looked up at Shishida’s hulking form, turned and met each other’s eyes, and then spun on their heels and ran back down the hall behind them.

“FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK FUCK!”

“SHIT SHIT SHIT SHIT SHIT!”

“COME BACK HERE AND TAKE YOUR BEATINGS LIKE MEN!”

Ojiro moved swiftly through the halls as he tried to navigate towards the stairs. While Sero was to move up top and disable the elevators, he was to help break up the villain team’s forces, cutting them off in the stairwell.

As he advanced closer, he frowned, smelling smoke and something spicy. A shift and he pulled a spare belt from the inside pocket of his Gi, unfolding it and wrapping it around his face to help with the scent.

As he moved closer and closer to the center of the building, however, the scent got more and more unbearable. Finally, he found the stairwell door, which was also leaking smoke up through the cracks.

Sighing at his luck, he leaned up against the wall and opened the door, letting the smoke billow out and start to flood the hall as he crouched low, trying to see into the stairwell for anyone moving.

Creeping up, he crouched by the banister and tried to look down, seeing only more and more smoke billowing up, but no one moving in it. Bracing, he tried to stand up and get a better view, before frowning.

Were those… wires?

And then he got shoved over the railing.

Jirou stepped back into the safety of the hallway and closed the door. With a sharp stab of her ear jack, she busted the door mechanism. Even if Ojiro recovered, he would have a hard time opening the door, at least. Voice muffled by the gas mask she wore, she left a parting comment.

“Bitch.”

And then she ran and jumped up and off a side table to her left, pulling herself up and into the ceiling tiles. It would take a minute, but she could navigate the dead space in the walls up and through the various floors, and get back up to the armory.

Her combat gear was up there, and she sure as hell wanted to use it.

Sen and Awase were catching their breaths and reloading. They had been taking potshots at Kodai from where they were, but apparently, the scale of a bullet wound on a giant woman was skewed, and they didn’t have the firepower. The explosion helped, but unless they legitimately aimed to maim and injure, there wasn't much they could do.

“HOOOLDDD UPPPP!!!!” “GRAFITTIIII!” twin shouts echoed from behind them, and the two fighters turned, in Sen’s case actually swiveling his head halfway around to look.

There, rounding the corner and sprinting their way, were Con Man and Larceny. Then a second later, the corner exploded as a *ten-foot tall Yeti monster came charging after them.*

Sen and Awase did what they did best.

They opened fire.

Shishida, obviously not expecting a concentrated spray of paint to the face and chest screamed in pain and reared back, pawing at the red smears across his face and glasses.

Then he paused and swore.

“Goddamnit, that killed me.”

The four villains breathed a sigh of relief.

Then Kodai put her arm through the wall next to them and the four of them split, running once more.

“GODDAMMIT. Hacker, if this shit keeps up, the building is going to come down! We’ve already lost most of the outer rooms on the north side from floors 17 to 22, and if they go any deeper, they’re going to smash through the main building supports. They aren’t fucking around!” Con Man called through the comms.

Izuku grimaced, hearing Con Man scream about the damage. He had no time to waste in this clash with the robots. Almost all of the guardian bots were out for the count, but he hadn’t completely escaped their attacks. His button-up shirt was trashed, covered in oil and scorched by more than one close call with a laser. Beyond that, he could feel the skin itch from a near hit by a bot that had snuck up on him.

These 3-pointers were definitely upgraded from the entrance exams. Even missing arms or legs, they would keep coming until he broke or ripped out the main power source or computer.

Not that the upgrades really slowed him down, Izuku mused, punching straight through the chest of the second-to-last bot, and sending it crashing into one of the other ruined hulks around the room. He turned and eyed the last one as it rushed him. Tensing, he jumped up to meet its charge, twisting so he could latch onto the last of the robots. A second of maneuvering and he was gripping its head between his thighs, and giving a full-body twist as he swung himself sideways.

With a creak and the sound of tearing metal, the head popped off, and Izuku wasted no time slamming his fist into the open neck cavity and gripping its main computer.

Ripping it out, the robot lost balance and collapsed into a pile, frozen in its actions.

Turning and rolling as he hit the ground, Izuku wasted no time and kicked his way through a pile of robotic corpses until he reached the safe, only detouring to reacquire his bag of tools from where it had been tossed aside early in the fight.

Ignoring the complex lock, Izuku leaped up and grabbed one of the chains to the safe, setting his grip and eyeing the lock before rummaging through his sack.

First, he pulled out his final mask of the event, a sleek thing of black enameled sides and deep grey details that would wrap around his face and the back of his head, while leaving the top of his head and his hair free. Pulling on the mask so it rested on his head, he rummaged into his bag once more, before coming out with a hilt about half a foot long and with a carefully guarded emitter on the far end. Adjusting so he was on the top of the safe, foot held by the chain and angled so he could see the safe's door, he pulled the mask down to his face. Satisfied it was on tight and he could still see, Izuku held out the handle and thumbed the button.

With a flicker of light and an almost oppressive wave of heat, the air was filled with the sharp sound and smell of burning ozone, a half foot blade of bright green energy came from the now almost uncomfortably warm hilt. With sharp motions, Izuku slashed at the hinges and traced the edges of the door of the vault, leaving molten metal behind and sparks flying as he worked. From the inside of the mask, the world darkened, the glass shifting color to block out the worst of the bright light.

Izuku finished with a final cut, and then tapped the button and gave it a push, turning his Plasma Cutter off before tossing it back in his bag.

Shifting, he pulled out a small spray can and shook well. With a test spray to check, Izuku began applying it to the metal, the white foam he was spraying fizzling and steaming and making the metal creak and groan as it left frost over the edges of the cut.

Satisfied, Izuku swung back to holding onto the front of the safe, eyeing his work. He checked if his gloves and their metal plating and rubberized grip were secure before he reached out and grasped the edges of the vault door, and with a flicker of gold and green across his limbs, he ripped the weakened and stressed metal door straight off its

hinges.

Revealing a phone taped to the back of the safe, with the UA symbol across its case.

He pulled the phone out and slid it into his pocket as he opened the comms. “All hands, objective acquired. Mei, get ready for exfil, I’m going to take care of the glacier and be your diversion.”

“Wait, Kingpin, are you serious? The prototypes are barely tested and we were planning to save them for day three! There's also half, if not more, of the heroes sitting rig–”

“And we don’t have the time. Mei… I trust your work. I’ll be fine.”

“I–you… DAMMIT. You better survive this, Ten Million. Everyone, get ready to rumble. Bay crew, you all ready?”

“The trucks are set to go, we just need the fucking ice out of here. Sparkle and Nightmare are trying to clear it away, but it’s thick as hell and we’ve barely made any progress,” Kuroiro’s droll tone came across the line, though the tension in it was clearly heard.

“Don’t worry. In a minute, all that’ll be left is shattered fragments. Be ready to shove them out of your way and go. Head out and split up. Sen, Awase, head to the west side above the loading dock and be ready to jump down and join them, Con and Larceny will follow.” Izuku closed his eyes and visualized this next bit. How could he get everyone's attention at once…? His eyes slowly drifted to the safe…

‘That could work.’

“Hey, Hacker. Can give me a waypoint to where Bakugou and Todoroki are?”

“Yeah, turning on your HUD now. Give it 30 seconds to sync with your gauntlet, the jacket, and the false eyes.”

Izuku nodded. He dropped to the ground and pulled the two briefcases from his duffle, popping the latches and opening them before setting them on the ground. In each case were four, small quadcopter drones packed snugly in foam. A small loading bar in his HUD lit up, and a pair of waypoints appeared to his left, out across the intersection. Ignoring them, he quickly stripped off his worn and tattered once-white dress shirt, tossing it aside and pulling out a thick and armor-plated double-breasted black jacket, acidic green lining and stitching

adding color.

As he pulled it on, the sound of whirring filled the air, all eight drones taking flight from the cases and rising in formation around and behind him.

He tightened the jacket, the small panels and armor across its surface whirring as it ran its own system check before another list of small icons appeared in his HUD.

Pulling the Plasma Cutter back out of his bag he headed for the safe, clicking it on and reaching up as he severed first one chain, then another. “Alright, Assault, status.”

“Hold one second,” came Assault’s gruff voice, before a cry of pain and a loud crash came across the comms. *“Back. They’re tenacious and have stamina for days, but they can't beat me. I’m pretty sure they’re trying to tire me out. And I can’t put them down. Not without my ace.”*

“Do it, then book it for Hacker’s location. Get everyone else out while I keep them busy,” Izuku decided, the heavy steel safe thudding to the floor as he cut the last chain, leaving only a few meters of length attached to the safe.

Grabbing the chain, he twisted and began to drag it to the window overlooking the intersection.

“PR, you willing to throw up boss fight music? I feel like it's about to be very appropriate.”

“Will do. Preference?”

“Something classic, but no lyrics if you can.”

Across the city a guitar riff echoed, drawing everyone's attention.

“That work for you?”

“Oh yeah.” As the second riff echoed through the air, Izuku placed his hand flat against the back of the safe, angling somewhere between the two waypoints. Carefully he set his stance, leaning into the safe and bracing his right arm with his left.

“Initiate Pulse Trigger,” he commanded, an icon in his HUD lighting up.

Across the back of his arms, the two gauntlets lit up. Each one was

massive, but different, both easily doubling the thickness of their respective limb, and the armor reached from near his elbow to halfway up his fingers in a half glove fashion on both of them, before leaving the tips of his fingers covered only in leather and rubberized grips. The body of each gauntlet was made of overlapping plates of dark black material and lined with thin green accents. In the center of his right hand, a glowing green circle began to glow.

Around the center of his right forearm, a ring shaped and styled almost like a revolver's chamber that was molded around his arm shifted and spun, clicking into place. A green line of crystal, just now visible as it lit up, poured green light forth from the thin slit into the chamber, casting Izuku's form in a sharp contrast of green and dark shadows. The mask he wore lit up with the face he had put on all game. A pixelated smile, eyes quirked and lips angled just enough for sarcasm to be implied. But beneath it, was a face of pure determination, focus, and a bit of worry.

'God, I hope this doesn't blow me up.'

"Pulse, Full Fire."

And then the chamber discharged, sending Izuku sliding back over half a meter, a faint green shockwave of energy rushing across the floor and blowing any remaining robot parts around him clear, and sending the False Eye drones into crazed dances as they tried to regain their balance mid-flight.

But where the safe once stood was now a long ripped up section of the floor, tile, and laminate torn up from the force of a half-ton-plus object being blasted across it at high speed.

And at the end of the scarred floor, was a shattered window.

One day before the exam (early afternoon)

Training Ground F was quiet. Momo sighed at that, shoving aside the sense of anticipation that she felt when considering that this would be a warzone in less than a day. She headed for a simulation cafe, one with comfortable seating, and no windows.

Momo glanced around once before walking up and knocking on the door, waiting until she got a 'come in' in response, and entered. Most of the people who had been talking about it were already present. Jirou leaned against the wall immediately to the left of the door, one

ear jack plugged into the wall to keep an ear out for the subject of their conversation.

Kaibara, Awase, and Monoma were silently sitting on a couch past her, all with slightly disgruntled expressions. They were followed into the circle of a room by Kuroiro and Tokoyami, sitting at a table between the couch and the armchair beyond, where Mei sat, fiddling nervously with one of the kinetic conduits for Izuku's Pulse Bracers. Shinsou sat on the ground at her side, biting his thumb in deep thought. On the counter where coffee would be served, Aoyama and Kouda sat, the latter with a small squirrel on his hand, petting it as a calming mechanism, and the former with a fairly blank and unfeeling expression next to him, one hand propped on crossed legs and resting under his chin.

Juzou was leaning against the wall past the counter, Kendou sitting in an armchair by his side with a contemplative frown on her face, an empty chair next to her. The last couch in the room was empty except for Shouji who was hunched forwards, all six arms clasped before him in a pensive pose.

"Ashido can't make it sadly, but she knows the basics and we can fill her in tonight," Jirou called, closing the door while Momo took the seat by Kendou. The room dissolved into an uneasy silence. They all knew why they wanted to meet up, but none of them wanted to say it.

Finally it was broken by an unexpected source.

"C'est tellement frustrant!" Aoyama exclaimed, expression one of annoyance "Midoriya is burning himself out and is going to make a stupid mistake, *d'accord?"* he declared, eyeing the rest of the room who had either tensed up or deflated at his words.

Monoma looked surprised though. "It's that bad? I thought he was stressed, but–"

"He's not sleeping well. Up late researching, up early training." Shinsou cut in, looking up, the deep bags under his eyes standing out in the light. "I keep catching him online in the group chat after midnight. And the coffee shop we both frequent mentioned that he's shown up almost every night this week except for Wednesday. A bad week of insomnia is better for him than this."

"He's taken a few naps. Once while in the middle of testing the Holo-tech. I let him sleep in the workshop, but he was up within two hours and heading out," Mei murmured, a faint hint of a blush rising to her

cheeks.

“I know he stayed up late yesterday; the testing track had his user logged in until almost eleven,” Kendou mentioned, rubbing her neck as she frowned.

“I’ve sparred with him a few afternoons, and he’s been getting sloppier as the week goes on,” Shouji confirmed, the tensing of his form belying the emotions not in his tone.

“And I can hear his muttering. He’s repeating things, going over the same plans over and over and it's going to make him freak the first time one falls apart. And we all know they *are* going to fall apart. No plans survive contact with the enemy,” Jirou confirmed, making the rest of the room mutter and eye each other.

Monoma leaned back, face more troubled than before.

“So we fix this,” Momo only realized she had spoken when the rest focused on her.

“I mean… Look, Izuku put us first, he's done a *lot* to prep for this. New tools, interesting tricks, research into Quirks and technology and tactics… Whether we win or not, we owe it to Izuku to try. And part of that is keeping us, all of us, in one piece. Including our illustrious leader… he needs sleep, a chance to unwind and relax, so we can all go into this with fresh eyes and ready to go to town.” She was on a roll now, the words coming from her mouth with ease and speed.

There were nods and smirks across the room.

“So, now the question is… how do we get our workaholic of a boss to sleep and relax…?”

Slowly, all eyes turned to Shinsou, who began to blush.

“I, uh, guess I can get us started?”

And with that, the villain team closed ranks and began to plan.

Kingpin needed to unwind before he broke.

A Circus of Chaos

Chapter Summary

Whats this...
hits the Nitrous
ITS THE POWER!

Enjoy!

Day 2: 14 hours, 2 minutes (2:02 pm, local time)

Katsuki growled to himself as he focused on the Tower.

Icy Hot's orders had been clear; wait until one of the heroes report that they found Deku, then take him out. No fucking complexity, no hesitation, no letting the freak get free.

So he watched.

He watched Icy Hot stick a glacier through the Tower.

He watched as half the heroes infiltrated the top while the other half ran containment. Shouts and orders and tactics were thrown around as the unfrozen floors in the bottom of the building erupted into chaos and all-out war.

It had been a fucking nuisance to keep himself from jumping into the fight. Only the fact that he could *feel* Icy Hot's eyes on him, waiting for Katsuki to fuck it up, kept him from saying 'fuck it' and just blowing up villain heads.

And then.

Some fucker started playing music.

Katsuki snarled, his already thin patience shredded apart as he took the first step forward, eyes locked on the Tower.

That's the only reason he saw it. A guitar rift drowning out the sound of the window shattering as a block of metal went flying, the mass twisting and cavorting through the air.

Straight at Icy Hot.

Katsuki cursed, already blasting off towards the dichromatic bastard, who looked at Katsuki with surprise. He wasn't even aware of the threat, already two seconds from the Tower and gaining speed from gravity.

It took three more seconds to reach Todoroki.

One second to grab tight, ignoring the start of a startled shout.

Another second to check the path, seeing where the object, glinting in the sun, would make impact.

Two seconds to shove and throw both of them up and *at* the glacier, away from the explosion of debris the impact would cause.

He dropped Todoroki and turned, tracking the streak of metal as it struck the building where Icy Hot had taken cover.

It hit the roof *and simply kept going.* For almost half a second he could see it, shattering and caving in the office building and carving a trench through almost half the floors before stopping, unseen in the depths of the building.

"Fuck," Katsuki muttered. It wouldn't have hit Todoroki straight on, but it had crashed through close enough that the debris could have knocked his ass out.

"Get up, Icy Hot, that was a fucking opener," Katsuki looked up at the top floor, seeing a figure appear. Too far away for any details, but Katsuki saw what he wanted. Green and black, with that crackling green electricity that's been showing up for the last few weeks whenever the nerd used his Quirk.

Deku was here.

"SHITTY NERD!"

Without hesitation, he thrust his hands back and blasted himself up at his rival, shooting up in an almost perfect inversion of the fucking meteor from earlier.

He was almost halfway when the nerd leaped out, swan diving to meet him.

This close, he could make out more details. The black jacket that

wrapped across Deku's form was layered with thin plates of dull metallic armor across his chest and shoulders. His mask wrapped across his entire face, green LEDs lighting up and showing a smile with X's for the eyes.

As the two closed in, Katsuki focused, readying himself to meet Deku in a clash of firepower.

Setting off one last blast to shoot him up, Katsuki brought his hand back, already condensing as much sweat into his palm as he could.

And then Izuku twisted, a shift of arms and legs and sleeves, the green lighting arcing from his figure as he contorted his form and flew by. The change of orientation meant that they passed face to face, the mocking green smile aimed his way as Bakugou tried to twist and reorient himself to give chase.

Kodai was looking and preparing to engage as the Kingpin entered the fray.

She kept close watch, readying her stance as the streak of green and black kept twisting and falling closer, until he began to pass the highest of the thin spires of ice.

And then he twisted one more time and came into contact with a long, sloping spire of ice stretching from the dead center of the glacier.

He landed on the spire, skidding and sliding as he tried to use the ice as a ramp, burning bright with speed.

Before Kodai's eyes, his form seemed to boil, black and green seeping off his form and blowing out behind him.

It took half a second of hesitation before she understood; *he was spewing smoke.* Green and black clouds, thick and dense were spilling and pushing out from his sleeves and collar, from the sides of his boots and from under his jacket. It was all back-lit and laced with the glowing green arcs of power that she had been informed were a sign of his Quirk. All that was clear of the Kingpin himself was the glowing face in the mist, a green smile that looked demonic and gleeful, as it slid and rode the wave of ice.

She finally snapped out of her staring and charged, tracing the most likely path to the end of the pillar. But it was too late, she could see the form as it tensed, shifting so that it slid and arced straight down

out of a curve at the center of the glacier.

She was close enough that she could hear him yell, and on instinct crossed her arms in front of her face to protect herself.

“PULSE, SIX CHANNELS, FIRE!” The cloud of smoke brought its arm, glinting black and green in the darkness, down. The fumes were blown away for just a second, revealing a rapidly spinning ring of green and black around his arm as it made contact with the ice beneath him.

And then she had bigger issues to deal with.

A wave of sudden green light and snow kicked up, blinding her and making her skin sting at the speed and chill of the explosion. Beneath her, the glacier shuddered and then shattered under the force, packed snow and loose ice turning into water vapor under the pressure. The larger structure broke and shattered, unable to maintain cohesive force as the kinetic energy flowed across it. She yelped in surprise and fumbled, falling and shifting through the now loose snow and vapor before she caught herself and angled to roll on impact.

As she hit the ground and adjusted before shifting to look up and regain her bearings, she had to simply stop and stare.

Where there had been a solid mass of ice encircling the Tower before, there was now a field of wreckage that covered the street for half a block in every direction. Massive pillars of ice lay stretched across the area, while the ground was littered with chunks of shattered ice. The air itself was awash with diamond dust, the sparkling mass thrown so high that the sun peeking out from the clouds and behind the buildings almost blinded her simply by the refraction.

And there, perched on one of the remaining chunks of ice near the Tower, rose the form of smoke and lightning, sparking with that same smile.

“Sorry, this is going to hurt,” came his voice, slightly distorted as it was amplified by the mask.

She had to brace and bring her arms up to block once more. The smoke burst, the figure of the Kingpin, shooting in a deceptively fast arc, arm raised for a strike-

The contact was like getting hit by a truck.

She staggered back, suddenly losing her balance as he hit dead center

on her guard, the Kingpin himself getting thrown back by his own punch.

'What the HELL. Is he even human?'

Mezou spun once more, deflecting a charge from Kirishima into Uraraka, sending both rolling back. He immediately pivoted, an open arm wrapping around Tetsutetsu as he charged past and twisted the metal man's force around before sending him crashing into the slowly recovering duo across the room.

"The ground is clear! Shouji, get going!"

Well, he didn't need to be told twice.

Twisting on his foot he broke for the center of the building, one arm stretching out to snag the duffle bags as he charged for the elevator shaft.

Two arms reached down, grabbing and twisting the hilts of both Escrima even as he turned back, standing in the doorway to the center of the tower.

"URARAKA!" he called, getting her attention. Her gaze, still slightly dazed, snapped up to meet his. "YOU MIGHT WANT TO GRAB YOUR TEAMMATES BEFORE YOU HIT THE GROUND!"

And then he tossed the Escrima sticks into the room, though they now looked very different. The sides of each staff seemed to expand out, long thin rods holding the rounded surfaces away from a pair of ominously glowing crystal cores, with long purple cracks across their once green surfaces. He watched as they soared through the air, an eye on his arm catching sight of Uraraka's panicked leap at her team even as he turned and dove behind cover himself.

With a glass-shattering *pulse* of energy, the wall around the support pillar he was against blew out, plaster and drywall littering the hall around him.

He glanced out and saw three figures floating out and across the sky away from the now destroyed expanse of window.

Uraraka looked stressed, but it seemed they were alive.

Good.

Turning back to the elevator shaft, Shouji pried it open and blinked.

There, looking up at him with a surprised expression, was Sero, both elbows aimed up to where he had already covered the elevator mechanisms with tape, disabling it in case they had planned to use it. “Uhhh… Well shit.”

“Sorry, I would give you a fight but I’m short on time.” Shouji raised the gun held in the lower arm at his side and shot Sero in the mask, chest, and side before his larger upper arm tentacle grabbed him and dragged him out of the shaft.

“See ya.” With a wave, Shouji leaped into the darkness of the elevator shaft, one tentacle already wrapped loosely around the cable leading down as he rappelled into the darkness.

Yui staggered back once more, though with far more control than the earlier three collisions, setting her stance quickly and swinging low at the form of Kingpin as he landed on the ground, only for the smoking form of the leader of the villains to spin out of the way, bending and contorting around the punch, before she felt him grab at her wrist. His two thin arms were barely able to grasp her tree trunk thick wrist.

And then, to her utter shock, she was being *Judo flipped,* the world around her shifting upside down before, with a thunderous crash, she felt her back and shoulder crush *through* the asphalt of the street.

She blinked, and it was only because she was looking up that she saw the smoke-wreathed form of Bakugou spiraling down in a tornado-shaped ring of air, with what looked almost like a miniature sun in the palm of his hand, aiming straight at the smokey form of the Kingpin in the street.

“HOWITZER IMPACT!”

The concealed form of Kingpin shifted but didn’t move, the explosion hitting him seemingly head-on, and blasting the last of any nearby ice into steam.

“HA, TAKE THAT DEKU!” Landing nearby, Bakugou eyed the smoke, and Yui took the opportunity to shrink back down so she could pull herself free from the debris of the street, rolling to her hands and knees even as she eyed the large cloud of smoke and steam in the center of the intersection.

Looking around, she could see the heroes had converged around them. Iida sprinting to come to a stop on a pillar of ice to the left, the forms of Tetsutetsu and Kirishima landing on the street to the right, a panting Uraraka behind them. The fire across from her and Bakugou fading to reveal a fully balanced and fresh Todoroki. From behind her and Bakugou, Pony darted up, hooves digging into the asphalt as she took her own stance.

Slowly, the smoke cleared and revealed the standing form of Kingpin, the smoke no longer drifting off him for the moment.

More importantly, it revealed the black metal of his left gauntlet, raised between him and Bakugou. It also revealed the kite shield that extended from its back, still smoking faintly from the explosion, but undamaged. From where she was, she saw that Bakugou tensed, an almost animalistic fury over his features and posture.

“I’ve seen that before… *Kacchan.* Blast shield, retract.” At the soft but distorted command, the shield folded back, the black metal collapsing into a long straight plate along the back of the gauntlet, glowing purple lines shining in the space between where it was stored and the casing.

“Why not show me something new? ...Or better yet,” Once more, smoke began to drift from his armor, the glow of his mask becoming his only recognizable feature again. “Let me demonstrate some new tricks.”

“Full Cowl.”

The green lightning returned to wreathe his body once more.

“Pulse Fist.”

The ring of green light and black steel around his right arm began to spin, slowly at first, then faster.

“Full Visor.”

The green LED face shifted to V’s for eyes and a wide grin that slowly blinked opened and closed as if it were laughing, and across the rest of the head, red dots appeared.

And then, with a crack like thunder, the Kingpin *moved.*

Bakugou was the first casualty, shifting into a guard even as the black

and green blur appeared directly in his face, right hand raised and a glowing green circle shining in his hand visible for just a second before it pressed to Bakugou's chest.

“Fire.”

Yui swears she blinked, because one second Bakugou was in front of her, and the next he was blurring past her into a pile of ice. Reflexively, she turned back to watch the fight, habits ingrained in sparring and combat classes kicking in.

“GET HIM!”

Mei glanced at the bike they had wheeled in from where it was stashed on the floor for refueling, and checked that the quickly forged supports Momo had built were solidly attached, before her comm came on, Izuku shouting over the noise of impacts around him.

“I got all eyes on me, ladies and gentlemen. If you’re gonna get out, do it now!”

“Bike crew about to leave. Loading bay, status?” she checked in first, stepping back and grabbing her coat and duffle bag from where it sat to her side. Lastly, she grabbed the large silver and bronze gun she had set aside when the siege first started.

“Dammit, we’re still sealed in. The side alley is filled with larger chunks we can’t clear away, they’re stuck around the garage door,” Awase’s voice was sharp and energetic, which Mei could agree with right now.

“Fuck!” She slammed her hands onto her table and tried to focus and come up with a solution, but the comm crackled once more and broke her train of thought.

“Give me a minute to clear it, but you better be ready to go. Bike crew, get going. Head to the northern safehouses.”

“FINE!”

Mei turned and looked at the other three who were set up in the room to follow Kendou on the bike. Momo had a rappelling anchor and coils of rope set up, strapped to the supports of the building behind them. Jirou had shown up a few minutes ago and was already finished getting her ‘Amp Tech’ greaves and bracers situated, and Monoma and Shinsou had made it up just a minute ago, each still reloading and

stashing as many weapons and grenades from the secondary weapons supply on their persons as they could.

With that last communication, however, all of them nodded and turned to the window. “Let's get going. The faster we get the objectives to safety, the faster we can go save our battle junkie of a boss.”

Kendou got on the bike and carefully kicked the engine on, checking her grip and the controls she needed.

Jirou walked past her and placed her speaker against the tall glass window. With one last look, all five villains nodded, and with a soft whir, the glass broke, sound waves dancing across its fragile surface to crack and break the delicate silicon bonds.

As the glass fell, all five readied, before with a squeal of tires on the carpeted floor, the bike shot out through the window, blue fire flaring at its sides as it dragged the objectives with it, the weight forcing the bike to almost point straight up even as Kendou lessened the jets and began to descend.

After her, the other four villains started out after the bike, leaping and sliding down the side of the building on lines of rope.

Across the street from them, Kinoko smiled with a gleam in her eye, and released the spores she’d been holding.

“Ah, hope you all have a fungi time!”

Izuku frowned and grimaced as he threw himself backward, avoiding the blue flare of Iida’s Reciproburst as it passed within a foot of his face. A flicker of red, arrows alongside the left side of his HUD flashing, alerted him to yet another attack. Mid-air, he fired off another pulse from the right gauntlet, using the recoil of the blast to contort and spin around, avoiding the wave of ice that surged up and under where he had been, even as it shattered under the force of the shockwave.

Skipping off the ground and twisting up into a ready stance, he glanced around, seeing each of his opponents outlined in red circles with distance markers, despite the cloud of black smoke that wreathed his form, the work of the eight drones that floated above the intersection.

Shifting slightly to set his footing on the loose ice, he checked the distance marker on the edge of his HUD that pointed behind and to the left of his position. The alley that was apparently still sealed off.

12 meters.

He focused back on the fight as two of the icons flickered, Bakugou and Pony.

The two charged, drifting wide to hit him in a cross pattern, Pony leading from the left as Bakugou built up sweat for a larger blast to the right.

“HORN CANNON!”

Shifting, Izuku tensed his left arm to deploy the shield once more, spinning as he stepped back, taking on the points of Pony’s horns as she shouted her attack’s name.

From her horns, a tremendous force slammed into Izuku’s shield, even as the impact was reduced and dampened by the compensator in the gauntlet. The force shoved him back several feet, left arm thrown back and guard wide open for Bakugou to take advantage.

But as Bakugou swung his half-opened palm down to strike, Izuku brought his right around to meet it head-on.

“DIIIIEEEEEEEE!”

“Pulse Burst.”

From his right gauntlet, four of the spinning channels lined up and fired in quick succession from the ring, the air in front of him bulging and warping as the kinetic energy was released into it. Multiple shock waves formed a bubble of force and pressure that met the collected sweat and explosive force of Bakugou's finisher, resulting in a much larger explosion midway between the two, sending both of the leaders, and Pony, flying away as a result.

Izuku tried to correct himself before he felt his shoulder slam into a pile of ice behind him. Panting, he looked up to see the heroes advancing and closing in, Todoroki throwing up more walls of ice to keep the fight contained.

Checking, Izuku grinned.

0 meters.

He turned and brought his right arm around, slamming it into the ice pile that blocked off the side alley.

“Fire.”

The shockwave washed through the ice, the villains huddling behind their vehicles as snow and shards of ice splashed off and across the loading bay floor.

As the crystal dust cleared, they could see that the ice that had blocked them in had been reduced to a mere fragment of its previous self.

“Alright, everybody on, we’ve got places to be!”

Nine villains jumped and scrambled onto and into the two vehicles, Awase grimacing at a twisted ankle as he sat down to take the wheel of the first car, a truck with a flatbed for the back. Reiko and Kuroiro slid in next to him, filling the rest of the truck cab. In the back, Tokoyami grabbed the netting over the top of the cab, Sen joining him.

In the SUV behind them, the other four villains prepared for a fight. Kouda was crammed in the driver's seat and holding onto the wheel, Aoyama climbing into shotgun. In the back, Juzou and Mina were gearing up to fight as well.

On the signal from the SUV, as they all got secure before Tokoyami started them off. Dark Shadow burst ahead of the team and clearing the last of their way through the ice field, even as Awase revved the engine. The truck jumped, wheels screeching as they grabbed at the concrete and asphalt of the floor before catching and accelerating. Out and up, the truck lept and swerved over the end of the loading bay and turned towards the opening of the alley as Awase gunned the engine, the SUV following behind.

In the back of the truck bed, holding tight, Sen began to laugh.

And then they swerved out into the intersection, into the fight between their leader and their enemies.

Sen grabbed tight to the gun in his hands, setting his stance as he swung it around, four barrels gleaming in the light of the sun as it

peeked through the crowd. As the barrels and sights lined up, he pulled the trigger. The click-clack of his gun was music to his ears as countless red goo rounds began to pour out across the street. Once more, a wave of red paint rounds fired from his hands, and he could only laugh. Painting a river of red as he swung the four barreled mounted gun around, he started focusing on his first target.

Kodai Yui.

The afternoon before the exercise

Izuku sighed and leaned back in his seat on the train, eyeing the roof as it passed through the streets heading home. Mentally, he was stuck looping through the plans and preparations he had taken, the skills he had pushed everyone to learn.

The announcement that they were reaching his stop broke him from his stupor, and sighing, Izuku stood and headed to the door of the train. He would go home, give everything a final check over, and then sleep as well as he could before the exercise started.

He began walking down the street, bag hanging from a shoulder and eyes focused somewhere in the middle distance.

“Hey, IZUKU!”

Well, he was. The shout had gotten his attention, and he turned and blinked in surprise. Apparently, he was far more distracted than he thought since there was now a freaking *limo* keeping pace to the side of him.

And out the window was Shinsou, looking at him expectantly.

“Hey Shinsou, what–” Izuku felt his body go slack as Shinsou’s power took hold.

“Get in the limo and take a nap.”

Izuku had no choice but to comply. He barely had a chance to see that the limo was filled with the other villains before the second part of the command took over and his eyes closed.

Getaway Chaos

Chapter Summary

The tower has fallen, now the Villains need to escape.

Day 2: 14 hours, 43 minutes (2:43 pm, local time)

Izuku knew the appearance of his team would throw the entire fight into chaos and confusion. It would force the heroes to split their attentions, to deal with multiple enemies at once, but it would also put his team at risk, mainly at the hands of two of his opponents:

Bakugou... and Todoroki.

He pivoted back towards the heroes as the sound of an engine roaring reached his ears. He eyed the distance to Todoroki, who was watching the back of the hero team and throwing up ice walls to keep the fight contained, and Bakugou, who was charging head-on at Izuku.

Tensing with the power of One for All coursing through him, he rushed to meet Bakugou, ducking the heavy right punch thrown his way to tackle him in the stomach instead, shoulder against his chest and hand placed flat against his stomach as he aimed, eyes locked on the straight shot through the crowd of heroes.

“Fire.”

Bakugou gasped and retched from the impact as his body reversed directions. Taking less than half a second for his feet to touch down from the strike and leap back at Bakugou’s form, Izuku guided it as he went rocketing back into Todoroki.

Izuku noted, but then ignored, the sound of the Quad-Gun starting up once more, though he did see a rapidly shrinking blur jump into the remnants of the ice in the area out of the corner of his eye.

Seeing Todoroki look at him, unscarred eye widening, Izuku smiled grimly under his helmet. Izuku grunted, feet planted into the ground as he pulled, twisting and putting his entire body into it. Hands now clenched tight to Bakugou's waist, the blond grunted and started to sweat as his body was pivoted around and lifted up, beginning to struggle as Todoroki metaphorically froze, whether in confusion or hesitation was unknown.

Giving into the desire to quip, Izuku shouted as he tensed once more. “SPECIAL DELIVERY!”

And then Izuku brought Bakugou around hard and let go, the echoing yell of “FFUUUUUUCCC–” being cut off as the blond Paragon made a heavy impact with his dichromatic teammate, sending both of them tumbling and skipping back across the street of the intersection.

Ignoring them, Izuku turned and slammed his hand into the wall of ice Todoroki had made.

“PULSE BURST!”

With another sequence of four rapid pulses, the ice shattered, the shards being blown aside by the shock waves of kinetic force which followed before Izuku turned and gave the same treatment to the other wall of ice blocking in the fight with the villains.

Shaking his arm from the sting of using that much force so quickly, he darted after the two powerhouses of the hero team.

However, in the corner of Izuku’s eyes, he could see it.

Traces of purple on the spinning ring.

He was nearing his gear’s limit.

Kendou hit the gas, the bike engines trying to find a purchase that wouldn’t give away like sand under her tires in the mass of mushrooms that had sprung up as the team of villains landed.

The colonies had expanded and appeared in what could only be a carefully planned attack. One moment the street was clear, the next a virtual storm of spores blew out from the alleys and expanded across the street. Now, the entire street and almost a quarter of the Tower’s side behind them was a maze of slowly shifting organic mass, and it was damn hard to pass. Momo had already spawned masks for all the villains, so there was no real risk of choking on the spores, but even now they were trying ineffectually to hack and shove through the mass of mushrooms.

And then there was a whistle of something sharp rushing through the air, and only Neito’s quick response in tackling Momo to the ground kept her from being cut by the burst of razor-sharp scales that punched through the upper edges of the mushrooms around them.

“That's Rin’s Quirk. He’s got an angle on us, keep low,” Neito growled over the comms.

But that was easier said than done. The mushrooms were constantly trying to shift and grab at the villains, and it was damp enough that the one attempt at using a created road flare to burn a path had resulted in the flame being consumed by the wall of mushrooms, still smoking despite the flame having long since vanished.

“FUCK, we need a way out before Rin gets lucky and starts picking us off!”

Jirou frowned and speared her earphone jacks through the mass of fungi.

“Goddamnit, I can’t get a read on them either, the mushrooms are spongy enough to absorb vibrations.”

Neito scowled and glanced back at the wall, before pausing.

“Jirou… can you confirm how far away they would have to be? Or at least give me a distance where you’re sure they aren’t?”

“...Maybe for a dozen meters, why?” she confirmed, yanking her boots from yet another growing attempt to consume them.

“Perfect, Momo, borrowing your Quirk for this,” Monoma called, tapping on her shoulder before he pulled her out of the way of another scattershot of scales.

And with that, the familiar glow of creation began to shine under his vest.

Sen cursed as the form of Yui jumped and vanished among the rubble before shifting his focus to the remaining members of the hero team, most of whom were panicking and trying to organize a counterattack.

“WHO WANTS SOME?!” he shouted, eyes manic before they locked on Pony, who was staring at him in confusion and fear. “YOU. YOU WANT SOME!”

“NO I DON’T! I DON’T WANT SOME!” Pony shouted, already beginning to leap out of the way and dodge as the wave of red traced after her.

Beside him, Tokoyami chuckled at the byplay, despite being tense and

focused, Dark Shadow keeping close to clear the way for the van as the trucks trudged through the ice. The heroes had scattered, leaping back and darting into the field behind them to take cover from the gunfire.

The two vehicles were swerving around the outside, picking a path through the chaos of debris as they headed for the streets leading out of the war zone.

Of course, that was the plan, but as the truck was rounding yet another pile of ice to get closer, they encountered a problem.

Namely, that weightless piece of ice almost the size of a semi-truck that was hurtling their way.

“Ah, fuck.”

The villains reacted, the SUV thrown into reverse and picking up speed as the icy meteor crossed the distance.

In the back, Sen aimed the gun with wide eyes and unloaded, the force of the consistent impacts of bullets to the floating ice slowly shifting it as it spun from the pressure, even if it kept moving closer.

And then Aoyama blasted it to pieces from the side, shattering it and revealing Pony behind it, ready for an attack.

A wave of red washed over her, sending her falling to the ground with a gasp of pain before the goo solidified.

“PONY!” came the shout from cover, before red goo spattered against ice. A second later, Aoyama's laser flashed across the center of the pillar that Kirishima and Tetsutetsu were hiding behind, and the ice crumbled and collapsed over the two durable teens.

Izuku ducked under a left from Bakugou, the heat of the blast that was set off in the blond’s hand close enough to feel across his scalp. Izuku kicked up and shifted, seeing the straight right thrown by Todoroki as the dual user moved in closer.

Spinning with the motion to get in close as ice bloomed across Todoroki’s arm, Izuku leaped over him, hands grasping at unguarded shoulders as Izuku dragged him back and off-balance. He then planted his feet on the ground and twisted, sending Todoroki into the air and launching him across the now desolate intersection where the three

were fighting.

On instinct, he turned, shield already deploying as he blocked and deflected a blast from Bakugou, the blond teen coming at him with murder in his eyes.

'I can't keep this up!'

Bakugou snarled and threw another explosion at him head-on, just as Izuku felt the sudden drop in temperature that always preceded one of Todoroki's glaciers from behind him.

'One of them would be hard enough, but both?'

Gritting his teeth, Izuku pushed and dove into the explosion, shifting his shield to catch the blast where it was the most concentrated as he fired another pulse blindly behind him.

In his HUD, a flashing message appeared in the corner of his screen.

The crystals were failing, and from the corner of his eye, as he brought the arm back around, he could see it. The purple cracks covering more and more of the green gems.

'I need to end this now, or at least enough to disengage!'

"This is a bad idea," Jirou drawled as she crouched behind cover, scales passing by her once more.

"Better than nothing. Is it clear?" Neito asked as he also took cover, crouching behind a moss-covered car, even as the shrooms tried to grab at him, a satchel filled with metal tubes at his side.

"Nobody in the street, they're both camped out in the buildings."

"Good!" With that, Neito turned and pulled the first tube. He held it and twisted the top before pressing in on the ends. A light started flashing in the center, and beeping started echoing through the clearing as the girls all dove for cover. Neito stood and chucked the first of the packages he had made as hard as he could, sending it crashing into and through the fungi walls to his left, at a right angle to the locations of their opponents.

"FIRE IN THE HOLE!"

With a blast of heat and force, the walls around them shook and

quivered, tearing under the shock and pressure as a large section seemingly vaporized and shredded due to the pipebomb Monoma had crafted.

Grinning, Neito threw another in the same direction.

Another explosion, another section of fungi vaporized, and this time it was followed by the frantic ringing of scales bouncing off covers as the route ahead of them opened up more.

“Two more to the side alleys out of here, Kendou. I’m going to open it and you need to go.”

He threw the third, arcing it up to land deep and blow through more of the fungus.

“And then the rest of us… will clean up here.”

And with that, he tossed the last bomb.

With the last of the four explosions, the path was clear, the moss shifting as it tried to recover and the path leading to an alley heading away from the Tower was revealed.

“WE’RE CLEAR, HIT IT!”

With a squeal of the tires, Kendou took off, the objectives attached behind her as she shot off through the still torn apart mushrooms.

Neito kept his eyes ahead of them though, waiting until–

‘There.’

Rin brought his arm up, standing to get a clean shot in the window ahead.

“Mei! Now!”

With a muffled whistle, Mei’s rifle came up and fired.

From the barrel, a pen-sized dart went flying, a red dot appearing from the laser sight dead centered on Rin’s form.

As the dart shot towards him, Rin flinched and tried to move out of the way. But a moment before the dart would have hit him, it popped, releasing a burst of red paint that splattered across him and the wall behind him.

“Shiitake! RIN!”

Neito locked onto the voice and grinned, before looking at Hitoshi who had his blank mask with the interrogation sign on. Shouting, Rin's voice came out.

“I’m fine! Can you stop the bike?”

“Su–”

Chuckling, Hitoshi tapped his forehead.

“Gotcha.”

“BIKE’S CLEAR, LET’S GET GOING!”

At the shout from Awase, Sen grinned and gave one last sweep of the gun before the SUV shot past him. He was going to watch the back, though a glance from the corner of his eye at a small counter on the gun almost made him sigh in relief.

He didn’t have many rounds left. However, as the SUV took off down the road, the truck swerved and then drifted into a side alley. For a moment, everyone but Awase was looking confused as they raced down side streets around the intersection in the center of the city.

“Where are we going?!” Sen asked over the comms as he tried to gauge where they were.

“Mezou’s got an eye on the boss, and we think he needs an exfil. You all up for it?”

Sen glanced down and grimaced before setting his shoulders and tensing. He had less than a thousand rounds left. Maybe a minute and a half if he was careful and alternated sides.

“I’m in. Hit it,” Sen called, echoing confirmations ringing through the comms as they took off down the side streets back around the Tower.

“Iida! I just lost contact with Rin and Komori. The objectives are loose, and Kendou is out and getting them away. You’re the only one fast enough to get it. Ignore the SUV and get the objectives!” Tenya grimaced under his helmet, watching the SUV speed up and vanish down the street. But taking out the villains wasn't the point, wasn't the right play, so instead he breathed deep, swerved and took a left, racing down a side

street and back towards the far side of the Tower's intersection.

"Where is she?"

Todoroki was ready, left side tensed as once again Izuku and Bakugou were thrown apart, pushed away from each other as the explosion of kinetic versus combustible energy blew the two away.

With the way clear, Todoroki brought his left hand up and *pushed.* From his hand, a wave of flames flared out at Izuku.

For a moment, he thought he might have overdone it before out of the fire, the blur of green and black moved and rushed out.

Todoroki thought his eyes were playing tricks, but then he saw it. The flames seemed to almost bend and push against the black smoke still pouring over Izuku, darkening and turning into embers as the smoke glowed from the heat, before drifting up and away. The black clouds flared and sparked as the fire got close, but never reaching past it to hit Izuku.

And Izuku was using that to his advantage.

Shouto barely had time to respond before his arm got knocked up and out of the way, the last of the fire flaring into the sky as Izuku laid into him with a quick combo of jabs that left Todoroki gasping. "H–How–"

"Thermal absorbing particles in the smoke–" Izuku dropped low under a heavy right, and kicked up, sending Todoroki staggering back "–Mei found the recipe in the UA systems."

Shouto clenched and tensed as the metal gauntlets Izuku wore slammed into his guard, sending him crashing back as he threw up a quick burst of ice, Izuku diving and swerving close once more.

Todoroki finally noticed that he was being pushed back to the front wall of the villains' Tower, and focused. His body temperature was getting dangerously low, frost already forming over his outfit. He was planning to use the fire to warm back up, but the fact that Midoriya was apparently fire resistant until the smoke ended was enough to keep him from wasting energy.

Focusing, he brought up his hands and delivered a series of jabs, trying to maneuver around the shield that flashed up to intercept the

series of blows, deflecting them and making his knuckles scream in pain from the impacts.

“DIE!”

And there was Bakugou back in the fight, coming from behind Izuku, who leaped and twisted, shield coming around and smashing down on the back of Bakugou's outstretched left hand, sending the incoming explosion into the ground and causing Bakugou to begin cursing out of pain.

Flipping over him, Izuku shifted and lunged from the ground, shoulder-checking Bakugou who rolled to his feet at Shouto’s side, grabbing his left hand gingerly.

“FUCK, Shitty Nerd broke my fucking fingers!”

Taking a moment, Shouto eyed Midoriya, who was watching them through the smoke and lightning.

But…

Why was the revolving ring on his right gauntlet glowing purple instead of green?

Shouto’s eyes narrowed.

‘The shock waves have been growing weaker, haven't they…? Izuku is on a time limit.’

Iida burst out of the alley and slid, eyes looking down the street through his helmet. There, less than a block away was Kendou, crouched low over a motorcycle as she sped down the road, a large collection of something wrapped in a tarp and on casters dragged behind her.

The objectives.

Shifting, he began to sprint after the bike, soon matching her speed. “HALT!”

Kendou glanced his way and swerved at him, slamming a suddenly enlarged hand into Tenya’s shoulder and making him stumble.

Sadly, he stumbled at highway speeds.

He barely had time to brace before he hit a parked car, crumbling the trunk and putting his helmet through the windshield.

"...Ow."

By the time he disentangled himself, Kendou was long gone.

Izuku ducked, a tightened stream of flames barely being deflected off his shield as he swayed back, letting an explosive punch pass him by.

Bringing the gauntlet around, he leveled it at Bakugou and braced once more.

"FIRE!" Bakugou tensed, and Izuku felt the faintest jerk before he heard it.

A cracking sound.

One that Bakugou heard, if the demonic grin stretching across his face was any indication.

"Aw, *fuck."*

He barely got the metal gauntlet up in time to catch the explosion that sent him flying back, a second crack echoing as the left side of his HUD flickered, the reinforced glass shattering.

"WHAT'S WRONG DEKU?! THAT GEAR GIVING YOU TROUBLE?!" Izuku looked up to see Bakugou stalking towards him, while behind them Todoroki lifted up his left hand, flame already whirling around him.

"Shit."

He pushed himself to his feet.

"Disconnect Pulse."

With a hiss, the thicker inner half of the gauntlet cracked open and fell off, hitting the ground.

Izuku reached up and let the ring slide down and off the now thinner wrist, dropping it. Izuku focused up at Bakugou as he flexed, locking the shield open. With the dead weight now gone, the strain on his shoulder from using the Pulse Cannon was more obvious than before. Sighing to himself, he brought his still-armored hand right hand up

and dropped the shield down lower. He would have to rely more on his fists than his tech now.

And then a message popped up in the still active, intact part of the visor, and he grinned.

“Well. Let's get to it.”

He charged, Bakugou grinning as he responded in kind. But at the last second, he shifted and twisted past, slamming metal knuckles into Bakugou's side and making the blond cough and jerk from the hit, an explosion already blowing past where Izuku once was.

And in the corner of his eyes, he saw a flicker of motion.

Mezou glanced down from the third floor, a tentacle eye peeking around a cracked window to check on the progress of the fight as a mouth and ear communicated with the rest of the villain team. Particularly the truck crew. The SUV was already concealed in the theater parking structure, and Kendou was on her way to the same location. Neito and Mei’s crew was also out of the fight, heading through the city on foot with two dead heroes in their wake.

Finally, Sen gave the go-ahead, and he could see the truck come bursting around a corner, gunning for the intersection.

Below, Midoriya was charging Bakugou, a single glowing green eye clearly visible through the cracked visor, the digital smile glitching in and out with each shift and jerk of motion.

More importantly, Todoroki was entirely focused on the fight before him, and the sudden appearance of the truck from the side.

He never saw the shifting motion of Shouji stepping out from his cover, and the gun coming up and aiming his way.

Bakugou gasped and shifted, rolling out of the way as Todoroki raised his arm, the temperature spiking as Bakugou prepared to capitalize on the blast of fire–

Only for the sound of *those fucking paint guns to echo from the other direction.*

He glanced that way, seeing Todoroki stagger in surprise, large splotches of red across his uniform.

And then the sound of a roaring engine reached his ears and he turned back.

“SORRY KATSUKI, GOTTA BAIL!”

The truck with a gun came roaring up, and Bakugou growled seeing it swing his way. He blasted himself out of the line of fire, zig-zagging across the intersection as the rapid crack of the gun splattered red across the ground where he had stood. Eventually, he ducked behind a large boulder of ice and growled to himself, glancing back just in time to see Six Arms and Deku leap onto the truck as it slowed, guns still aimed his way. Looking across the intersection, he saw Uraraka helping pull Kirishima and Tetsutetsu out from a pile of ice and tapped his comm.

“Uraraka, get high. Watch where the hell the truck goes!”

“Got it!”

He watched the truck bail as Uraraka took off, super leaping up to the rooftops to try and follow, only for a stream of red to intercept her.

“SHIT!”

Watching the girl collapse and hearing her comm go silent, Bakugou screamed.

“GODDAMN SHITTY FUCKING DEKU!”

Izuku sighed and reached up, unclasping the mask from his face and pulling it off, the smoke clear as the truck left the battle behind. With the adrenaline fading, he could feel the pain he had been ignoring come back to him. His entire right side felt tenderized, the joints oddly loose and heavy.

Shouji crouched next to him as the truck took a corner, Izuku hissing as it jarred him just enough for the sore feeling to burn like fire for a minute. “Anything feel broken?”

Focusing on what hurt, Izuku muttered, “Pretty sure I’ve cracked a rib, or three, and my arm feels like it’s been put through a grinder, but nothing feels broken.”

“The theater has some emergency medical kits and a spare scanner. I can give you a check and see what damage there is. Breathe for me.

Any fluid or bubbling?" The tall, silver-haired fighter eyed his boss carefully.

"...Nope. Nothing but feeling sore," Izuku admitted, grimacing as the truck jarred his arm once more.

Shouji checked his eyes, and while they seemed to be responding right, he still asked. "Concussion?"

"Everything looks like it should and there's no haziness. Think I'm clear," Izuku commented, eyes opening and meeting Shouji's.

"Good."

Day 2: 15 hours, 12 minutes (3:12 pm, local time)

Mei filed into the old theater with the rest of the 'objective crew.' The entire camera system around the area was already hacked in case of an emergency, and the loading bay was big enough to stash the two trucks and the bike. They would have to get one of the other two box trucks sooner or later for the actual exit from the city, but that would be easy enough overnight.

Sadly, it seemed her team had arrived last.

The rest of the villains were scattered among the seats and aisles of the theater, while Izuku sat on the edge of the stage, shirt off as Shouji wrapped his ribs.

He looked up and grinned as the last five of them came in, and Mei felt a smile stretch across her face to match.

"That's all of us. Seventeen out of seventeen," Izuku called out. "And we have fourteen out of fifteen objectives!"

The crowd of villains cheered and clapped.

"Now it's just–"

The sound of a generic ringtone cut him off.

Izuku frowned and reached into his jacket, pulling out a phone with the UA insignia on the case.

"It seems we have a caller."

Izuku answered on speaker.

And everything came crashing down.

The night before the exam

Shinsou and Momo looked at each other nervously before the former reached out and knocked on the door.

“Just a moment!”

Sighing, Shinsou rubbed his face and whispered, “I hope this is worth it.”

Momo grinned, sharp and fragile. “It is. We need Izuku to relax, and this is part of that.”

They both broke off their conversation to look at the door as it opened, the green hair and kind smile of Inko Midoriya greeting them at the door.

“Oh! Hello, are you Izuku’s friends? He’s not quite home yet, but–”

“Actually, Midoriya-san,” Momo cut in. “We’re here about that. We were wondering if you’d be fine with us kidnapping Izuku for the night!”

“E–Excuse me?” Midoriya-san looked surprised and worried, so Shinsou stepped in.

“Not actually kidnap, but we’re a part of his team for the exercise starting tomorrow, and wanted to take him out to relax beforehand.” Shinsou rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly “We’re a bit worried about him pushing himself too hard.”

Inko relaxed under the explanation and sighed. “Oh, thank god. Please, take good care of my son.”

The two villain team members glanced at each other. “We will. We promise.”

Sometimes, You Have to Go Out with a Bang

Chapter Summary

The Exam reaches its conclusion.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Day 2: 15 hours, 13 minutes (3:13 pm, local time)

“Moshi moshi, this is the Hero Class Villains, how may I direct your call?” Izuku answered with a smile, getting chuckles and grins from the rest of his tired team.

Now that he had a chance to focus on the phone, Izuku could see the number calling and could hear an automated voice begin to speak. The smiles and laughter faded, replaced by annoyance and pale faces.

And for a few…

Rage.

As the message ended, Izuku slowly tapped the end call button and set the fourteenth objective at his side, before putting his head in his hands.

“Those… those *fuckers.”* Izuku glanced up, hearing the voice of his second-in-command, Hitoshi. “You know, we were warned that this would be unfair - that the villains were at a disadvantage,” Shinsou was pacing, arms crossed and an expression of spite on his face, “But this? This is *crossing the fucking line.”*

Izuku could see the villains starting to respond, and he realized that Shinsou was about to go off the edge. So he returned the favor he had asked for at the start it all…

And stopped Shinsou from doing something he would regret.

“We’ll do it.”

The night before the exam

Izuku stirred, feeling soft padding beneath him and sniffed, smelling a

variety of bright, crisp scents in the air.

Wait.

What?

Shifting, he braced and sat up, yawning loudly as he blinked, only to freeze.

He was apparently laying on a couch, in what was possibly the most opulent lobby he had ever seen. Marble tiled floors, and soft bronze and wooden color schemes for the walls, with cream colored couches with tan accents.

“What?”

“Ah, Izuku! You’re up.” A bright pink flash of skin above him made the teen jerk back. Ashido leaned over the couch and looked down at him. “Come on, up! UP UP UP! We only have a few hours!”

“Wha– wait, where?” Izuku tumbled as Ashido all but dragged him up to where he quickly realized the rest of the villain team was, and then shoved him into the arms of Mezou.

“You guys know what to do!” Jirou called out. “See ya in a bit!”

As the girls crowded through door across the room, Izuku took note of a counter and a smiling older woman who waved and giggled as he was dragged off to the right of the reception desk, through a wide door made with traditional rice paper shoji.

“Okay, someone want to explain what's going on?”

“You need to unwind, Boss!” Awase wrapped an arm around Izuku's shoulders and gestured at the air, as if presenting a grand visage. “We’re heading into a hell of a stressful time, we got plenty of things to do, and a time limit to get it working right!”

Sen cut Awase off. “And if you stay stressed, you’ll make mistakes. We’ve got the place booked ‘til eight, then we’ll all sleep at a hotel near the school, where all our gear’s already stashed. We’ll get dressed and ready and head out early.”

“And where exactly are we?”

Monoma grinned as he turned at the front of the pack and slid a shoji door open at the end of the hall. “Nabor Hot Springs and Massage

Parlour. Full service and mixed bathing package."

Izuku blinked and looked out over the calm and steamy clearing, the early afternoon sun already coloring the water shades of gold and reflections of the blue sky.

Then the words kicked in and he began to both panic and flush in embarrassment.

"W-Wait, what? *NABOR?* As in, 5-star-resort-and-a-million-yen-per-person-just-to-get-in-the-door *Nabor?"* Izuku flushed harder. "And mi– mixed bathing? What– No– we–"

"Relax, Boss," came the interruption from Shouji, who chuckled slightly. "We checked with everyone and we're fine with it. This is to relax, not get more stressed. Besides, who knows when we'll have to save someone who is underdressed as a hero? Might as well get used to it now, not later."

Any other complaints Izuku had were ignored as they dragged him into the changing room, Shinsou smirking as he tossed a small bag his way. Izuku sighed and started stripping, the rest of the team grinning as they did the same. They all scrubbed and showered, washing the grime off.

Soon, the guys started to wander out into the actual hot springs, towels wrapped around their waists. However, Izuku hesitated at the door before getting shoved through.

He glanced back to see a smirking Aoyama, *"Mon patron,* we do not want to keep the mademoiselles waiting, *oui?"* The blonde clasped a hand on Izuku's shoulder and grinned before pushing him out down the hall. "We are young men, chevaliers in the prime of our lives! No hesitation, no regret!" with each word, Aoyama seemed to sparkle and Izuku began to relax.

"Ye– Yeah!"

"Je suis content que tu es d'accord."

With that, Aoyama pushed a much more unworried Izuku through the last door into the springs, the classic stone and plantlife appearance offset only by the tall clean-cut wooden fence around the perimeter.

Izuku admitted he enjoyed the hot springs, and had barely gotten settled before one of the others tossed a towel over his eyes.

“What–”

“Relax, ‘zuku,” Shinsou’s familiar drawl came from his side. “I figured you’d enjoy closing your eyes a bit. You have bags matching my own under them, I would rather keep my trademarked style.”

“Your style is that of a finals week survivor, all year round, Shinsou.” Izuku retorted, deciding to lean back against the side of the spring and relax into the warm tile.

“I own it though.”

“If you sa–” Izuku was cut off when he felt motion by his side, someone sliding into the water and the sound of a soft, content sigh.

A *feminine* sigh.

“...Hey. Shinsou. The girls are coming in, aren't they?” Izuku fought to keep his voice calm and even, already feeling the blush work its way up his chest.

“Yep,” came the deadpan reply, with the barest traces of amusement.

“The towel on my face is so I couldn’t see them?”

“Of course.”

“I hate you.”

“Debatable.”

Izuku felt the blush intensify as not one, but *half a dozen* girls giggled and tried not to laugh on his left.

It took a while, but Izuku slowly relaxed and took off the towel. And while he felt a near continual blush at the glimpses of skin that breached the water, much like the boys, all the girls had appropriate towels to give them some level of modesty.

As the sun started to drop however, an attendant came by and invited everyone inside, where a series of rooms with massage tables waited.

And by eight, when they all left the building, Izuku felt… calm. Loose and relaxed and unstressed for the first time since the exercise had been announced.

As they took the limo to the hotel, Izuku stared out the window and

slowly felt his eyes close.

He enjoyed this last stretch of peace…

The calm before the storm.

Day 3: 5 hours, 43 minutes (5:43 am, local time)

Izuku watched the last of his team file out of the theater. They had their orders, and all but one of them had an objective that they were responsible for getting out of the city with them, though they were separated into three groups of five just in case.

Mei glanced back one last time before stepping through the doors, her pink hair shifting as she joined the forms of Shouji, Shinsou, Momo, and Monoma.

Those five had one last job to do.

Alone in the theater, Izuku twisted and stood up on the stage, walking around aimlessly. After the stress of the night and the debate about how to go about this final objective had gone on, the chance to take a moment to himself was nice. And now, he had to give the three crews time to get ready for the end. But in the meantime…

Izuku looked up and around before he saw it. The faint gleam of a camera watching him from the back wall of the stage. He walked closer, centering himself in the middle of the stage before it. He cleared his voice and breathed slowly, trying to calm himself as he held up a card he had scrawled out a single phrase on.

'You want this piece with audio.'

After a few minutes for them to get that ready, he breathed slowly, before looking up and making eye contact with the camera.

"Nedzu… I know why this is the last objective. I understand that this is a test of morals. Of integrity and willpower against greed and obsession…"

Izuku sighed, and reached up, wiping the faint traces of tears from his face, smiling even as more welled up.

"But I think you've underestimated my team. And more importantly, underestimated me. I promised myself that my team would make it through this intact, with all fifteen objectives. I plan to keep that

promise.”

Izuku glanced down, chuckling.

“Just not how I expected.”

Tears dripped to the floor.

As the stars faded, Izuku and his bike rolled to a stop, turning across the middle lane of the street. He took a moment, kicking out the stand for the bike and letting it stand on its own. He looked around.

He was standing less than 100 meters from one of the four main exits from the city, the one at the very eastern edge of the training ground. Looking down, Izuku ran his fingers over the dents and grooves littered across the body of the bike, remnants of the fight yesterday. Glancing back down the street, he checked his visor’s display to see if he was in the right spot before unlatching the green and black bike helmet and hanging it from the handlebars, wincing as his arm stretched funny, agitating the still sore shoulder socket.

Settling back down, Izuku sat on the seat sideways, looking out past the tall walls designating the training ground boundaries. Above him, the stars slowly began to fade, light beginning to blur the black-blue of the sky into a pale grey.

His phone buzzed, but he ignored it.

Izuku sat and stared up at the sky, watching as the gradient slowly transformed, layers of color shifting shade by shade from dark to light. But before the sun peeked over the horizon, the rush of feet rang out from behind him, and his phone beeped a short tune.

6 AM.

Exactly 48 hours since the villains made their first strike on the city.

Day three.

And before him, at the end of the road, the gate out of town began to open.

Looking over his shoulder, he saw the heroes who had gathered for a final fight. He reflexively began to catalog their states.

Iida. His armor was cracked, and his helm gone. His eyes were serious

and wary, glancing around as if expecting a trap.

Tetsutetsu. Body tensed and already shifted to metal. As if he would have to intercept an attack, or fight at any moment.

Kirishima, ever-present smile tense, as if it felt fake to even him. His arms were flexing, the shift from stony to skin slowly fading back and forth.

Kodai, already towering over the rest of her fellow teammates, but not to her full height. Her arms were bruised black and blue from the fight the day before, red paint still in her hair from her close call.

Kacchan. Gauntlets gone, bruises and abrasions across his arms and face. Hands wrapped in bloody bandages.

Izuku presumed Hagakure was here as well. He had heard the shifting of gravel nearby, close enough to hit, but likely far enough to dodge out of the way.

Six heroes.

Six left out of twenty-five.

Turning back ahead of him, Izuku eyed the gate and looked out at the horizon peeking through it, the forested groves that covered UA's campus visible through the opening.

Maybe two minutes until dawn reached the city. A few seconds passed before Izuku spoke once more.

"I want this over with..." he said softly, voice still strained.

Kirishima was tense. This meeting. The first one where they didn't immediately start fighting, where it seemed as if Izuku wanted to talk…

It was hard not to immediately jump to start a fight. Only Bakubro's command kept all of them from going in full charge.

"Something's… off. The nerd looks… let's talk to him first."

And it was true. The guy before them wasn't the infamous 'Kingpin' right now. No masks or hats, no suits or armor or crazy weapons.

No smile. Not Midoriya's smile when he was happy, or the vindication

of those artificial smiles that the villain they had fought all weekend had worn.

Instead, he looked strained. Tired. Bags beneath his eyes and skin pale.

Not getting an answer after a few moments to his comment, Izuku spoke up once more.

“You know… I wanted to do something interesting here. To make–” Izuku’s voice caught. “…To push the heroes to be better.” There was a weight here. Clearing his throat, Izuku began what was clearly a side topic, “I’m a hero nerd. I study them religiously, from powers to tactics to rankings and mindsets… to the villains they face,” Izuku’s voice trailed off, but in the early morning, it was loud and clear.

“…Not every villain is the League. Or Noumu. Or even like Stain.” That made all the remaining heroes but Iida, flinch and eye each other. When the hell did Izuku fight Stain? “Sometimes… sometimes the villains are better than heroes. Better plans. Better fighters… I wanted to show you, to make you all think… I think I went too far, though.”

Ahead of Izuku, the sun began to peek over the horizon, the sky shifting into a glorious pink-blue haze.

“So… sorry. For everything.”

Izuku turned back and smiled, sadly, before standing and turning to face them. Slowly, he bowed, long and low.

As he rose back up though, the smile quirked.

“But… I really want to rub it into Endeavor’s face that I won with a perfect score… so, sorry not sorry!”

Izuku grinned.

Kirishima only barely registered the bright red dot on his chest, right over the katakana now visible on his shirt.

The words ‘SUPER VILLAIN’ were written in deep, black bold against the blue of his shirt.

And then the sound of whistling air reached his ears.

He almost turned, already trying to see who the target was, mind still

not caught up to what he was seeing even as Bakugou shouted, the words lost to the pulse in Kirishima ears as the whistle passed within half a meter of Kirishima's half-turned face.

Then he saw it: a thin cartridge, barely bigger than a pen, a snap reaching his ears as it seemed to jerk and freeze right before his eyes.

But then in his peripherals, he saw red. Red like blood. Like his hair after a fresh dye.

He looked over and his eyes widened in surprise.

The left side of Izuku, from the center of his chest out and across his arm, was dripping, leaving only the kana for the word 'SUPER' visible.

Dripping red paint that quickly began to expand and harden. In seconds, the entirety of the remaining hero team was staring incredulously at Izuku, who smiled, RG13 flakes seeming to scab across his form.

Across the entire training ground, almost five kilometers away, Mei sighed and looked up from the scope of her rifle from the top of the last of the three box trucks. She was laying down, rifle laid out and a drone sitting just above her shoulder. Besides her, a laptop was open, showing a live feed from another of the drones, this one set to hover less than ten meters above Izuku, a red line and slowly shifting reticule marking where her rifle was aimed. She rapped the side of the truck with her knuckles even as she opened up the comms once more.

"Kill… confirmed. Get us out of here. We've completed all fifteen objectives. Let's go home."

With the sun rising behind them, Shinsou drove the truck down the road and through the gate.

At the south and north gate, silent and morose villains had already walked and driven out as well, frowning at the last action they had been forced to take, their victory tinted bittersweet, even as some tried to laugh and smile.

And as Mei and the rest of the 'Kings Crew' left the city, the verdict was delivered.

Iida was still in shock at this turn of events. The red stain now

solidified, and Izuku's smile, tired as it was, nearly stretched from ear to ear.

And in front of them, arms held out and his head thrown back, red goo embedded into his clothes, Izuku began to laugh.

The heroes tried to process what they had just seen. Izuku was dead! The Kingpin had died.

Of course, Bakugou was the first to recover.

"WAIT, WHAT THE FUCK?!"

Izuku wiped tears from his eyes and smiled.

"I just won."

As if to punctuate his statement, a screech echoed over all of their earpieces before Present Mic's voice became clear.

"THE VILLAIN TEAM WINS THE CIVIL WAR EXERCISE!"

Chapter End Notes

And thus, we come to the close of the Civil War Exam...

But Not the end of the story.

STAY TUNED FOR THE EPILOGUE, coming this next week.

and don't worry, while the Story of the Hero Class Civil War may be coming to an end...

The Hero Class Villains Shall return... in Hero Class: Danger Days.

Epilogue: Among the Fallout

Chapter Summary

In the end, we look back.

The morning after the exercise

Aizawa crossed his arms and leaned against the hallway wall as the low murmur from the rest of the teachers drifted out of the door next to him. He had paled, then turned red with rage less than twelve hours ago, mimicking the villains as they rampaged and argued against the fifteenth objective.

Still, those words echoed through his mind.

Seven words that nearly broke the so-far-defiant villains.

"The villain team must kill the Kingpin."

Even now, that thought made him grit his teeth and wonder.

He remembered his run as a villain during his second year. Him and only ten others. They played it long and slow. Stealth was their weapon, and for teens they were good at it. But manpower and time were against them… One by one, members were picked off, objectives destroyed or taken back as the heroes spread out to take them out.

He had walked out with only three remaining teammates, and only four objectives on the third day. Nemuri and Hizashi had been his best friends ever since and had joined him as teachers when he decided to step back from the front lines to focus on the next generation. His third surviving teammate had pushed forwards. One of the youngest pro heroes… and one whose career burned far too fast and was cut short.

"Tensei… your brother needs to loosen up," he muttered under his breath. He shook himself out of his reverie. "But man, you should have seen these villains…" Aizawa chuckled before his mood dropped once more.

Finally, Nedzu stepped out of the room and started walking past him.

"Would you like to join me, Aizawa? I intend to go congratulate our winner when he exits the infirmary." Nedzu's voice was even and

pleasant, but Aizawa knew his boss, his old history teacher, well enough.

"...Fine."

For a moment, the two were silent, Aizawa slouching as he kept pace with Nedzu.

"You know, I am quite impressed with the villain team," Nedzu finally mused. "In the entire history of the Civil War exercise, only three other teams ever actually reached the fifteenth objective. And all three lost at that point. You remember I taught history, so... how about a quick lesson? I feel you'll appreciate the context of the fifteenth far more."

Aizawa tilted his head and focused on Nedzu, feeling his interest stir.

"Oh, you've never heard of them. They never won their matches in the end. And several were even expelled. The first went into a rage and ended up seriously harming several of his teammates when they tried to take him out. The commotion was so loud, it drew the entire hero team to their location, and all of the villains were apprehended."

Nedzu chuckled, "The second was worse. He answered the phone by himself and decided that it meant he must offer himself up to the heroes. Sadly, he never found the loophole and lost the team the game. Several weeks of fairly intense social aggression, particularly from his past teammates, and he resigned from the school."

As the two entered the elevator down, Nedzu continued his lesson. "The third was enlightening. A duo had formed an alliance, two of the strongest students of the year's 1-B class. Both worked together, trying to form a cohesive team with much of the rest of the class, but with two very different roles. One team was intel and information retrieval, run by the Kingpin of the year. And the other team was the offensive force that quite simply destroyed any competition they came across."

The elevator opened and the two teachers stepped out and began following the trail between the Training Ground F observation building and the hospital much closer to the field. "In the end, it turned into an all-out war as their team fractured under the objective. Half going on the defensive, the other half attempting to kill their once leader. Quite a number of very serious injuries arose from that."

Nedzu paused and sighed, "In the end, the villains took themselves out, with one of the more reclusive research members detonating a

metaphorical ‘bomb’ that eliminated the entire team.”

The principal glanced around, eyes taking in the bright spring day around him as he stared off at the sunlit campus, Aizawa halting at his side.

“The third, and last, of these events happened thirty-one years ago. The year before Endeavor himself took the exam as the villain, making the previous highest score of thirteen objectives and only 60% casualties. He never faced the last objective, and sometimes I wonder…”

Aizawa focused, “The last objective to kill the leader…” but now that the knee-jerk reaction is gone. Now that he has had time to contemplate, it sinks in… “It’s a test of morals and determination, as much as loyalty and trust.”

“Quite so. A villain team that has compromised their morals for the exercise and let anger, aggression, spite, *hate and greed,* dominate their actions? All it would take is two of them, maybe three to give in to the impulse. And then the arguing starts, the back and forth devolving into infighting and backstabbing.” Nedzu sounded almost gleeful. “But your class… your ‘problem child,’ as you’ve so fondly named him… he’s quite the specimen. His charisma, while awkward, is *magnificent* to behold, and his intellect is even more so. Tactics, mindset, sheer unstoppable will… and the rest practically feed off of it.”

Nedzu glanced up at his once-student. “Midoriya has achieved a perfect win. And he did it without compromising himself beyond repair. While he cracked and bent, he did not shatter. And those around him did not shatter. And that makes Midoriya *oh-so-dangerous.”*

For a second, Aizawa’s eyes widened as he saw the edges of what Nedzu had seen… and it was terrifying.

“...So what next?”

“Simple. We provide our nascent heroes who played the villains with guidance, and Midoriya in particular, with a goal.”

“Goal?”

“He said it himself. He desires to be a symbol of peace... But the greatest castles have more than one support. The villain team is already swept up in his wake, and I don’t doubt that sooner or later

more will join him. All he has to do… is push them to stand not behind him, but at his side."

Aizawa considered this as the two picked up the pace once more.

"If this goes wrong…"

"Then it will be the greatest disaster UA has ever produced," Nedzu chuckled. "Isn't the idea… *exciting?"*

"FUCK!" Bakugou shouted as he paced, the large room where the rest of the hero team was resting echoing with the crackle of explosions and the silent intensity of glares and unsaid accusations. The stream of swears quieted, leaving Bakugou standing and panting with his back to the rest of his team, the last of the living through the long dead.

"We got played," he growled in rage.

"No. Shit," the carefully pronounced response drew everyone's eyes to where Uraraka sat, "I've been looking back through the feeds all night. The villains were on us every minute! If it wasn't Jirou eavesdropping, it was Mei hacking our computers or communicators. And you know what? Most of that didn't even matter."

"What do you mean, it didn't matter?" Kodai inquired, leaning forward over her knees.

"It *didn't matter,"* Uraraka began, before gesturing at the still-growling leader of her team. "Because Izuku knows our 'illustrious leader,' and has paid close attention to his mindset and fighting style for almost *thirteen years.* Hell, until Todoroki stepped in and took charge, most of our actions and reactions, orders and plans - they were all worked out and accounted for."

The hero team murmured amongst themselves, while across from them Bakugou bit back his retort and leaned back against the wall. Slowly, he closed his eyes in contemplation.

'Did we lose… because of me?'

The rest of the hero team broke into argument and debate, even as he stayed uncharacteristically silent.

"You've done quite a number on yourself this time kid, though far less than the mess you made during the Sports Festival."

Izuku sighed as Recovery Girl's accusing tone pierced through his skull. Apparently, while he didn't have a concussion, it was close enough that he felt vaguely hungover. The lack of sleep wasn't helping. Several members of his team sat around him while the rest had gone to collect the last of their leftover gear from the Tower and caches across the city. To his left, Awase sat with his leg in a simple brace, a fracture from getting clipped by debris during his fight almost healed. And down the line of cots, Shouji sat with his ribs wrapped up. His fight at the top of the Tower left him with a few cracks and stressed bones. Monoma sat across from them, smirking to himself after the extended lecture he had received from Recovery Girl about his little… arm stunt.

Izuku, however, was the most wounded.

Three knuckles were cracked from compression and recoil, his radius and ulna covered in microfractures, along with a singular fracture on the ulna that was close to a full break halfway up. The mottled bruises had mostly faded, the torn and strained ligaments along with them, but he was too exhausted for a full heal. As it was, Recovery Girl had his arm wrapped with a brace. Along with that, she had treated a variety of second-degree burns and his cracked ribs with ease, though he was still covered with more bandages than anyone outside a shounen anime should wear at once.

"Thanks, Recovery Girl."

"Hmph. You better not be getting hurt like this again," she turned and stomped out of the room, heading across the hall towards the other half of the infirmary, the one designated for the hero team.

Sighing, Izuku closed his eyes to relax, only for the door to open again. Blinking, he looked up to see the rest of the villain team meander in and take up seats around the room, most of them looking bitter.

Soon, all seventeen were sitting on various seats or leaning against the walls. A silence equal parts somber and suffocating filled the space around them. Izuku frantically tried to think of a way to break it, maybe with a speech he could say, before someone else beat him to the punch.

"Why the fuck are we acting like someone died?" Awase, bandana tight, grin sharp and mocking, scooted forward and stood up, stumbling as a surprised Sen caught Awase's arm around his neck,

helping his friend stand. “We fucking won! Yeah, it sucked. Yeah, that last objective was utter *trash,* but we won! We just placed the highest possible record, a perfect win!”

The tone across the room shifted, and then with a chuckle, Jirou spoke up. “We did, didn’t we?” she grinned and glanced around. “We *kicked some ass.”*

“Fuck yeah we did!” Ashido’s bright pink arm wrapped around Jirou’s, and a surprised Momo’s, necks.

“We came–”

“–We saw–”

“–We *conquered!”*

“We wrecked everything!”

“My babies were awesome!”

“We learned a lot…”

Shinsou grinned and whistled. *“Fuck* yeah, we won. You know what, though? I feel hungry. Who wants to go get some food?!”

“BRUNCH!”

“I know there’s an American diner not far–”

“Perfect! I want myself some pancakes!”

“Crêpes! Idée merveilleuse!”

Izuku grinned and pushed himself up, only for Shouji to steady him as he felt a headrush. Standing, he started towards the door, the rest of the villains already heading that way.

However as they passed through, he held up a hand and looked down the hall… *bullseye.*

“YO, EXTORTION!” Sitting down the hall on a bench, Setsuna looked up in surprise. “We’re getting some brunch, wanna come?”

“Uh, sure, if you’ll have m–”

“Of course we will. Come on.”

In a flicker of motion, Neito darted towards her and grabbed her hand. He pulled her up, Yuga joining him at Setsuna's other side. *"En effet, mademoiselle. Rejoignez-nous, s'il tu plaît."*

Setsuna blinked before Neito whispered the translation to her, making her blush as the three hurried to catch up.

Stepping out of the building, all of the villains found themselves on a slight hill just outside the wall of the district, trees and long grass covering the slope beneath them, and the southern road out of the district to the left.

From where they stood, they could see across the battlefield. The Tower, still leaning off-kilter from the fight, and the remnants of ruined buildings.

"So… how are we getting to the diner?" Sen asked, looking around to see if there was a bus or anything, only seeing the two battle-scarred SUVs, Izuku's dirt bike, and the box truck left nearby. "Those aren't street legal… right?"

Mei grinned and pulled a group of keyrings from her pocket, "Actually… Those are all registered under our names, and four of us have temporary legal permission to drive thanks to some paperwork I filled out!"

She tossed three of the keys, Awase grabbing his in his off-hand, Kendou and Izuku catching the other two.

"But... BEFORE WE GO!"

Jirou grinned and met Mei's eyes, pulling out her phone as Mei turned back to the city.

"WE NEED FIREWORKS!"

Jirou hit a button, and from every speaker still in the city, a song began playing.

And in the heart of the fake city, the Tower that used to be the villains' main base bloomed with flames as explosives and leftover gear self-destructed. Around the testing ground, dozens of more buildings and apartments blew out; smaller backup locations, unused traps, misplaced gear, and spare tools. On Mei and Jirou's command, the city was filled with explosions and the sound of deep bass blaring.

And on the hill, the villain team laughed and cheered.

Kamino Ward

A screen set next to a hospital bed flickered to life, drawing the attention of the scarred form that turned to face it.

“Sensei… our contact in UA has provided us with an interesting recording they think you’d want to see.”

“Send it through…” A deep wheeze echoed across the connection. *“I find myself… intrigued.”*

As the recording began to play, All For One paid close attention.

Roll Credits

Hello! It's been almost month since the end of Hero Class Civil Warfare, and I know many of you have been looking and wondering where the next story begins! I decided to take November as a… rest. A break. A chance to unwind a bit…

(And to stockpile some new content for down the line.)

Starting now, my plan is to release at least one chapter of something per week. Sadly it won't always be a Hero Class Villains chapter, but that means that some other plot bunnies get to come out and play. Including, yes, Magic Was Not Lost!

(I swear it will update before the years over. But it's killing me man!)

As of this short update, the first chapter of Danger Days should be live. But there's still something I want to say that, sadly, I forgot.

The 'credits', if you will.

I wanted to take a moment and say thanks to you, the readers. To everyone who's commented, who's subscribed or Kudo's or bookmarked my fic. You guys have been helping me more than you could know. And even if you don't comment or kudos, or if your comments are short and just an exclamation of joy, thank you. And those who have written some absolutely *awesome* analysis, or theories, or even the people who tried so hard to track down who Extortion is. To those who pointed out issues or typos.

I would also like to thank my very smart and very patient Beta Crew. I don't know all their AO3 names, but my crew has grown from nobody to a dozen very awesome people who have helped me out when it comes to the more technical side of editing this mess.

So, thank you to the Beta Crew:

Prussia (New_Prussia on AO3)(NewPrussia#6564 on Discord)
Goose (nick0calus on AO3) (nick0calus#2878 on Discord)
Animus (Animus_Melodiam on AO3) (Animus Melodiam#6488 on Discord)
Crystalquill (Crystalquill on AO3)
HAZZARD "Lovecraft" OVERFLOW (HAZZARD_OVERFLOW on AO3)
Astahfrith(astahfrith on AO3) (astahfrith#1282 on Discord)

Duality
Fanfic-ception
RockMonster (RockMonster#0503 on Discord)
Scarlet
Sheograth
Vesper
Wolfkun

As always, feel free to come and yell at me in person over the discord, or visit my Tumblr!

Thank you so much for reading, and I hope you have a wonderful holiday season!

-RogueDruid

End Notes

Comment's, Kudo's, or Fanart is always welcome! Or come visit me on my Tumblr (http://roguedruid.tumblr.com)! or come chat with me on my discord!

DISCORD!
This story has a TvTropes page! go give it some love!

Works inspired by this one

Intersection by Crystalquill, HAZZARD_OVERFLOW, RogueDruid (Icarius51), Gifs for HCCW by RogueDruid by Laurasline, {Villains VS Heroes} by GamerOtakuSama (orphan_account), Hero Class Civil War Playlist by DuelyPostNoted, Rate of Change by KirthKraft, Fast-Forward by HydieWindow, Hero Class: Interschool Warfare by Plasma_Assassin, The old bait and switch by FanFiction_Artist_Prototype, Hero Class Shadow War by BaySprout, fire_hazard101, Villainous Hero by Soul3818, Replaced This Bracelet With a Cuff by Call_Me_Redacted, Blame by Kolista, Villainous Tendances... by SilentKnight369, The Mafia Game by Anonymous, Run little Bunny! by UndeadSoldierShady, Zaijasku, The Traitor Game by Etrama, Divided (Heroes vs. Villains) by pickles_and_me_are_my_otp, No Regret by Axel_BlackThorn, KeroseneQu33n, Kill Your Heroes by GalaxyBreath, Marionettist's Helpers by FearsomefigureT9, War Games by Kryik (a_kry), Why We Should(n't) Work Together! - INDEFINITE HIATUS- by Hakkekkyu, [Podfic] Hero Class Civil Warfare by RuneLore, Fugitive by My_Inner_Introvert, Fugitive ~The Rewrite~ by My_Inner_Introvert, Queen on The Throne by World_of_nothanks, A Villain's Chess Game by NightWriter93, 'How to be a great villain' for dummies - by Midoriya Izuku by Madu, Games of Chess by Let_me_do_space (orphan_account), WARFARE REPORTAGE by Armaria, Quoth the Raven by TheHouseofHouse101, Kingpin Leads Villains to Victory by Reese_bailey_writes, When Predator Becomes Prey by

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